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Fourth periodic reports submitted by States parties under articles 16 and 17 of the Covenant

Addendum

COLOMBIA* **

[9 May 2000]

* The third periodic report concerning rights covered by articles 1 to 15 (E/1994/104/Add.2) was considered by the Committee on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights at its thirteenth session (see E/C.12/1995/SR.32, 33 and 35) in 1995.

** The information submitted by Colombia in accordance with the consolidated guidelines concerning the initial parts of reports of States parties is contained in the core document (HRI/CORE/1/Add.56/Rev.1).

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I. GENERAL CONSIDERATIONS

1. Compared with the rest of Latin America, Colombia's performance appears in a positive light. In the last 25 years, the rate of growth of its GDP has been above the regional average. During the 1980s (1981-1990), which were particularly difficult years for Latin America, Colombia's per capita GDP grew altogether by 17.9%. This positive result stands in clear contrast to the general trend in the region as a whole, where growth was negative by 7.9% (CEPAL, 1994, p.41).

2. In the 1990s, Colombia's economy began to slow, while the other countries showed signs of recovery. From 1991 to 1994, per capita GDP in the region grew by 6.1% and Colombia's by 8.6%. Although Colombia remained above the regional average, the gap was closing.

3. At a steady rate averaging 23% over the last 25 years, Colombia's "moderate and persistent" inflation may be said to be *sui generis*. When its Latin American neighbours were experiencing hyperinflation, the rise in the Colombian price index appeared a model of stability. Nevertheless, the present Government has succeeded in maintaining single-digit inflation.

4. In the last 40 years, Colombia has undergone a rapid process of democratic transition, from being a rural country with a population growth of over 3% per annum towards the end of the 1950s to becoming a predominantly urban nation, with population growth below 1.8%. Fertility rates have dropped from 7 to 3 children per woman, while infant mortality has fallen from 90 to 28 live births per 1000. Of course, fertility changes have occurred unevenly in different areas, regions and departments. Nowadays some regions still at pre-transitional levels of 5 or more children per woman, like Chocó and the new departments, coexist alongside areas with less than three children per woman, like Bogotá, Atlántico, Valle and the coffee-growing departments.

5. Social expenditure, which was below the Latin American average in 1990, has now risen above it, accounting for up to 13% of GDP in the last four years. The effects of fiscal adjustments on social expenditure have been significant, and it took nearly a decade to make up for the proportion of social expenditure lost on account of the 1985 adjustment.

6. Progress in education has also been significant, although the magnitude of sectoral challenges is demanding an even more dynamic and progressive educational policy. Decentralization has played an important part in improving access to health and education services by encouraging local participation not only in the administration and control of basic services but also in their financing. With regard to the gender issue, substantial progress has been made in favour of women, particularly in areas such as access to education, although there are still noticeable inequalities in terms of wages on the labour market.

7. Inequality is still so glaring, in fact, that in that respect Colombia ceases to be a country in the forefront of human development, with indicators showing values of 10 years ago. The loss of human lives on account of violence has also led to a shortening of life expectancy, especially among men between the ages of 25 and 40. It is estimated that men have lost between 3 and 4 years of life expectancy on average, which is reflected in a drop in the Human Development Index (HDI).

A. Development of the social sector through development plans

8. When the 1991 Constitution was introduced, development plans became a constitutional requirement. Under articles 339, 340 et seq. of the Colombian Constitution, within the first six months of taking office the President of the Republic has to submit a National Development Plan to Congress, made up of a general part and a public sector investment plan. The general part must give an outline of

long-term national aims and objectives, medium-term State action targets and priorities and the general economic, social and environmental policy strategies which will be adopted by the Government. The public sector investment plan must contain the multi-year budgets of the main national public sector investment programmes and projects and must specify the financial resources allocated for their implementation.

9. In conformity with these constitutional principles, the former Government outlined its policy in 1995 in the programme known as the "Salto Social" (social leap forward), and on 17 November 1998, the present Government submitted its "Bases for the 1998-2002 National Development Plan", approved under Act No. 588 of 1999.

10. These development plans reflect the varying attitudes to social development as a plan objective. There has tended to be a movement of oscillation between distribution as the main objective of development and economic growth as a basic condition of human development.

11. Conceptually speaking, a shift has occurred from considering the poor as the target of social programmes towards the notion of a struggle against poverty conducted with and by the poor. Starting from poverty as an economic phenomenon that can be overcome by incorporating more of the population in production, an effort has been made in addition to introduce policies aimed at the distribution of wealth and property. From the type of action where the State has been the main player, the approach has evolved towards a struggle involving all sectors and considered as a basic condition for rapid, balanced growth along a sustainable path.

12. Development plans have taken account of new educational achievements and the identification of new challenges. The concern with illiteracy has given way to a concern for post-secondary education as the key to competitiveness. The policy of empowering the Ministry of Education (MEN) as the operational centre of the system has yielded to a preference for strengthening the educational system itself as the implementing force, leaving the Ministry in charge of management, evaluation and definition of programme contents. Management has become more specialized according to different levels, with university education becoming more independent and the Ministry concentrating rather on basic and intermediate education.

13. Another major change introduced with the plans has been the creation of a system which, while it preserves State control of education financing, leaves the regions more in charge of their own spending. At the same time, funds are carefully earmarked for education, in order to avoid any diversion into politically attractive short-term ventures.

14. Despite further achievements in the rural sector, there are still many persons who well into their working lives are unable to read or write: almost one-tenth of young people between the ages of 15 and 24 and one-sixth of adults between the ages of 25 and 39. In other words, there is still a gap to be filled before illiteracy can be eradicated, as a policy not only of social and economic development, but also of justice and social equality.

15. Considerable success was achieved in teacher training with the introduction of a new status, thanks to which in ten years (from 1976 to 1986) more than half all publicly employed teachers obtained university training. At the same time, teachers have ceased to be on the lowest rung of the professionals in terms of salaries, which have grown substantially in real terms in this decade.

16. Nevertheless, it has to be recognized that teacher qualifications still tend to be inadequate in the light of current economic requirements.

B. 1998-2002 National Development Plan[1] "Change for Building Peace"

17. The central goal of the 1998-2002 Development Plan is building peace. The proposed approach is a commitment, on the part not only of the Government but also of the whole Colombian population, to work towards building a society favourable to peace. "The edifice of change for building peace must rest on four pillars, without which it will never be more than a dream: making the State viable and open to participation, rebuilding the social fabric, progressing with development hand in hand with peace and reviving employment as the engine of economic growth"[2]. Four strategies were launched in pursuit of that goal:

a) The first strategy consists of reforming our political and government institutions with a view to consolidating democracy, strengthening governance and allowing society to direct its activities towards the common aims of peace and development. This means, in other words, shifting towards a participative form of government;

b) The second strategy of change for building peace consists of strengthening the social fabric, through a fundamental commitment by society in favour of education, health and nutrition, which will take the form chiefly of giving proper care to all our children and youngsters, excluding none;

c) The third strategy of the plan is combining development and peace. This includes the instruments and priorities of the peace effort, understood not only as a State policy but also as a commitment by society as a whole. The aim is to identify the most suitable instruments for furthering negotiations leading to the end of the armed conflict, as well as sectoral priorities to tackle the factors causing the spiral of violence. The strategy includes political reform and a series of support actions for sectors, groups and regions which have been severely affected by violence, such as agriculture, the environment, ethnic minorities and many chiefly rural regions of Colombia. The strategy implies combating corruption and strengthening justice, defence and security;

d) The fourth strategy consists of reactivating production by encouraging exports and regional competitiveness. Foreign markets are the most viable source of sustained prosperity, so that the plan includes practical actions in the sectors of infrastructure, mines and energy, industry, trade and tourism, in an effort to redirect domestic production towards external markets. Conquering these markets must become a major national objective, which will allow us to generate the jobs we need. This objective is particularly important for the Caribbean coast, a region where all the plan's strategies take on special significance.

C. The Colombian economy in the 1990s

18. Colombia is at present facing two serious problems: social conflict and unsatisfactory economic performance. Social conflict expresses itself essentially in terms of poverty and violence. In 1997, the spending power of 50% of households left them below the poverty line, while two out of every 10 Colombians earned income below the extreme poverty line, which means that almost 8.3 million persons could not earn enough income to cover the cost of a basic basket of goods. According to the quality of life survey carried out that same year, the percentage of the population qualified as poor,

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[1] 1998-2002 National Development Plan. Change for Building Peace. Office of the Presidency. National Planning Department.

[2] Words spoken by the President, Dr. Andrés Pastrana Arango, when submitting the outline of the National Development Plan to the National Planning Council. Bogotá, 17 November 1998.

measured according to unsatisfied basic needs[3], fell from 32.7% in 1993 to 26.9% in 1997, while the percentage of the population below the extreme poverty line was reduced from 13.5% in 1985 to 9% in 1997[4]. It is possible, however, that this gradual progress on the social front has been adversely affected by the recession which has affected the Colombian economy in the last two years.

19. The effects of the social conflict have been aggravated by macroeconomic instability and the low rates of economic growth in recent years. In 1990, the macroeconomic accounts were balanced, mainly thanks to the high price of coffee and the oil finds in Cusiana. In the early 1990s, Colombia undertook a process of institutional restructuring and economic modernization, which were aimed at taking the internationalization of the economy a step further. Extensive reforms were undertaken, leading to the promulgation of the new Constitution in 1991, the regulation and definition of decentralization objectives, the opening up of the economy and the reform of the social security health and pensions scheme. The aims of the reforms were not only the modernization of the state and economic growth, but also better income distribution and less inequality as regards access to basic services, by identifying the needs of the most vulnerable sector of the population and focusing services on that sector.

20. Economic activity slowed somewhat in the period 1990-1992, with average GDP growth of 3.3% and average unemployment close to 10.5%. From 1993 to 1995, GDP grew at the rate of 5.3%, while unemployment fell to single digits, reaching a low of 7.6% in September 1994 with a significant rise in the job rate. The economy appeared to have definitely recovered from the crisis of the 1980s and the labour market appeared once again very healthy. However, after 1996 the dynamic of economic growth faltered, with GDP rising only 2% that year and 3.1% in 1997. In 1999, the combination of a number of internal and external factors, such as a fall-off in capital flows, a drop in the world price and output of coffee, a falling price trend for commodities on the international market and a huge collapse in private investment, left the country's economy in its worst plight for 70 years, with an estimated fall of 3.5% in GDP. As might be expected, this faltering GDP trend in the second half of the 1990s was accompanied by an increase in the rate of unemployment, which exceeded 20% in the seven main metropolitan areas by September 1999.

21. Unemployment has two basic components, one cyclical and one structural. The first arises basically from low growth rates in the economy, and the second from discrepancies between the job characteristics or profiles of labour supply and demand[5].

22. Rising cyclical unemployment is due to an increase in the degree of uncertainty perceived by economic agents as a result of macroeconomic instability, which led in the case of Colombia to a dramatic deceleration of private investment aggravated by a drastic rise in real interest rates. A further factor in the economic recession was the fall in the external prices for several Colombian exports, especially primary goods.

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[3] The NBI indicator considers as poor any persons or households who are lacking any of the needs defined as basic, for instance experiencing inadequate housing, housing without services, critical overcrowding, lack of schooling and high economic dependence.

[4] There are considerable differences between regions and departments. The poorest region is the Atlantic Coast, while the departments with the highest poverty rates, measured according to the NBI, are Chocó, Córdoba, Sucre, Nariño and Boyacá, where the figure exceeds 50%.

[5] As shown by Pagés and Marquez (1998), this type of situation does not apply only to the Colombian economy but has been widespread in Latin America.

23. The macroeconomic imbalance was due to a worsening of the fiscal deficit, which exerted upward pressure on interest rates and cast doubts on the Government's anti-inflation policy, which only began to show results when pronounced recessive tendencies appeared in 1999. The external financial crisis also led to a strong rise in the external interest rates paid not only by the public sector but also by the private sector, while at the same time bringing strong pressure to bear on the exchange rate. The defence of the exchange rate band by the Colombian Central Bank (Banco de la República) pressured interest rates still further, obliging the bank finally to abandon the system of exchange rate bands and to let the currency float freely.

24. The high interest rates in turn adversely affected the holdings of the financial system, which restricted the availability of credit to the private sector. As credit became more expensive, the increase in real wages also had a negative effect on job creation.

25. In combination, the above factors slowed investment in industry and in construction, a sector which in the first five years of the decade had generated significant demand for unskilled labour. Employment in those two sectors fell by 2.8% and 3.3% respectively between 1994 and 1998.

26. In addition, there was a significant change in the pattern of growth of the Colombian economy. In the latter years, the focus of GDP shifted to mining, energy and financial services, all sectors with low demand for labour, while agriculture and industry fell as a proportion of GDP.

27. Despite the reforms and modernization drive and the investment boom it brought about in the initial stages, the development model established in recent years has reflected the Government's unsuccessful efforts to promote social equality and unity, while the focus of welfare has shifted towards improving and developing management capacity in that area. In effect, the significant increase in public expenditure during the 1990s (which generated a fiscal deficit for the central Government equivalent to 5% of GDP in 1998) not only failed to reduce inequality and poverty, but led to high levels of internal and external debt and a fall-off in private savings, while it stimulated sectors producing non-marketable goods and services, to the detriment of sectors geared to international trade.

28. To sum up, the decade of the 1990s ended with Colombia having to face the effects of economic crisis, which was also a regional and worldwide phenomenon. The present Government is implementing a social policy aimed at reducing inequality and poverty and at protecting the economic, social and cultural rights of the population, with an emphasis on its most vulnerable sectors. It is also undertaking all possible measures to improve macroeconomic conditions and to restart economic growth. With these objectives in mind, it has designed a National Development Plan containing the necessary strategies and programmes. However, it has to be borne in mind that the restrictions imposed on any further increases in public expenditure, the ongoing armed conflict, the situation of violence prevailing in the country and the impact of external conditions are limiting the chances of achieving those objectives in the short and medium term.

1. Socio-demographic indicators

a) Life expectancy

29. Colombia has achieved substantial success in terms of increasing the life expectancy of its population. The indicators currently stand at 64.3 years for men and 73.24 years for women, with a national average of 68.77 years. This represents a significant increase compared with the figures for

1985, which were 64.19 years for men and 71.06 years for women, with a national average at that time of 67.62 years[6].

30. The most noteworthy features of mortality trends as far as the Colombian population[7] is concerned have been as follows:

- A significant decline of mortality by gender and age;
- Progress achieved in the control of the main causes of general and infant mortality, with as a consequence a general tendency towards a gradual reduction;
- The enormous impact of violence on the adult male population, especially in the 15-40 age group;
- A change in the general pattern of mortality, reflecting the country's progress towards conditions normally observed in low-mortality societies, where the lowest mortality is observed among 5 to 9 year old children;
- Increased life expectancy has chiefly benefited Colombian women;
- Major differences may be observed in mortality rates prevailing in the country between more developed areas and more deprived areas. In some cases the differences in life expectancy have been as much as 10 years;
- It is very likely that the country will be able to reach its target of 70 years life expectancy by the year 2000.

b) Mortality

31. The mortality rate for children under 5 years old in 1995 was estimated at 36 per thousand live births. Infant mortality in 1990 was estimated at 39 per thousand live births and by 1995[8] at 28 per thousand live births. According to the infant mortality figures worked out by the National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE), the mortality rate for the five-year period 1994-1999 was 33.8 per thousand live births, with the figure for the final year dropping to 30.2 per thousand. The increase in the figure compared with that of 1995 is partly explained by improved registration of vital statistics, and by a reactivation of late foetal mortality records, which had been abandoned since 1987. Ministry of Health estimates show that for 1995 the infant mortality rate in the poorest sector of the population was 76 per thousand live births and 61 per thousand among the low-income population. This means that despite the improvement observed in the national average, there has been a clear discrepancy in the rates for the poor and very poor population, which shows clearly how vulnerable this group is and how measures to assist it should be given priority[9].

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[6] National Administrative Department of Statistics (DANE) 1998. Departmental projections of the population by gender and age 1990-2015. Colombia.

[7] Ibid.

[8] Profamilia, 1995. Population and Health Survey.

[9] National Plan of Action for Children, July 1996.

32. There are major differences in Colombia in infant mortality rates between different departments and between rural and urban areas, owing to enormous socio-economic and cultural inequalities. The infant mortality rate in rural areas in 1993 was twice that of urban areas (the two figures being 54.0% and 27.2%)[10]. With regard to departments, the differences range from 50/1000 live births in Chocó, Nariño, Cauca and the new departments to 30/1000 live births in Bogotá, Valle and Antioquía for that same year.

33. Among the causes of infant mortality, the most important are perinatal sicknesses, followed by pneumonias, acute diarrhoeic diseases, malnutrition, congenital diseases and accidents. In the mortality statistics for five to nine year old, the first cause is trauma by violence or accidents, followed by infectious, metabolic and congenital diseases.

c) Maternal mortality

34. In 8 years, maternal mortality fell from an average rate of 119.8 per 100 000 live births in 1986 to an average rate of 78.2 in 1994, which means a fall of 35% in the rate during the period[11]. These average rates hide significant differences between regions and socio-economic groups. Maternal mortality rates in the Pacific Coast, for example, remain three times higher than the national average and nine times higher than those of the metropolitan area of Medellín (72 per 100 000 live births)[12].

35. The main cause of maternal death in Colombia is toxaemia (38%), followed by abortion (16%), haemorrhages (15%), delivery complications (15%), puerperal complications (10%) and other pregnancy complications (6%)[13].

36. On a municipal level, maternal mortality rates vary considerably according to local socio-cultural conditions. At present, 114 municipalities in the country have three times the national rate, while 370 are above average. The women most affected are those in the 25-29 age group.

37. Various regions and groups in the country have been diagnosed as requiring priority action in the area of sexual and reproductive health. According to a study by the Ministry of Health's epidemiological department[14], maternal mortality is either excessively high or has not been properly monitored in the last five years in 250 of the country's municipalities, which is why these particular municipalities have been designated as areas of high risk requiring priority action to reduce rates and for improved monitoring and control of sexual and reproductive health.

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[10] National Planning Department, "System of socio-demographic indicators". Bulletin No. 20. Calculations based on the 93 Census.

[11] There are no up-to-date data available to estimate changes in the maternal mortality rates for the last four years.

[12] Family Care International (1998). "Dialoguemos sobre salud sexual y reproductiva. Maternidad Segura". Bogotá.

[13] Ministry of Health (1996). "Mortalidad Materna en Colombia".

[14] Ministry of Health (1997). "Municipios de riesgo para mortalidad materna en Colombia 1990-1995". Epidemiological Department.

d) Malnutrition

38. Generally speaking, the nutritional situation of children has improved slightly over the period 1986 to 1995[15].

39. Malnutrition falls into the following types:

a) Chronic malnutrition (leading to retarded growth). For 1986 the rate was 16.6%, falling to 15% in 1995. According to the breakdown by areas, almost one in five children in the country's rural areas suffer from chronic malnutrition, compared with one in eight in urban areas;

b) Acute malnutrition (excessive thinness compared to height). The rate was 2.9% in 1986, falling to nearly half that rate (1.4%) by 1995. According to the breakdown by regions, the condition is widespread in the Pacific region, where up to five times more children suffer from this type of malnutrition;

c) General malnutrition (underweight according to age and gender). This rate was 10.1% in 1986, falling to 8.4% by 1995. Despite these improvements, inhabitants of the Atlantic and Pacific regions, the subregions of the Pacific Coast and rural areas suffer most from being underweight, with shortfalls of as much as 17%.

2. Future prospects for Colombia

40. Colombia is facing major challenges to attain sustained economic growth, to reduce poverty and high levels of unemployment, to improve its competitive position and, above all, to recover social unity and repair its social fabric, which will undoubtedly constitute the two main pillars for building peace.

41. Economic growth is seen as closely linked on the one hand to the growth of exports and on the other to quality of education, accumulation of human capital, technological development and research. Bringing the Colombian economy back on a sustained growth path, above 5% per annum, and strengthening human capital are basic objectives of the 1998-2002 National Development Plan. This implies not only improving the quality of education and increasing school attendance and the average schooling of all Colombians, but also preparing the labour force to respond both to the progress and requirements of the production system and to the need to reduce unemployment. In addition, in view of the relation between income inequality and education, it is also hoped that by improving access to education, it will be possible to improve the situation of inequality and poverty in the country.

42. The rising trend of social expenditure in the last decade shows that increasing social expenditure as a proportion of total national expenditure is not enough on its own. The efficiency and supervision of public management, the extension of decentralization with a clear allocation of powers and responsibilities to all the different territorial authorities, intersectoral coordination in the implementation of programmes and resources, transparency in the actions undertaken as well as social participation and mobilization are all essential preconditions for expenditure on the social sectors to achieve its purpose of improving the living conditions of the population.

43. In the task of overcoming challenges, however, it is not sufficient to preserve, increase and strengthen natural, physical and human capital. The levels of poverty and inequality in the country have given rise to a need to make real efforts to acquire a different form of capital, namely social capital. It is

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[15] Profamilia (1995). National Population and Health Survey.

hoped that building up this form of capital will increase popular participation, recreate trust in the State, and encourage joint, collective actions to improve the efficiency of project implementation. In other words, the aim should be to involve individuals, communities and civil organizations in common actions and projects, from whose results all will benefit. International evidence is there to show not only the effect of social capital on growth but also its positive impact on human capital.

D. Violence in Colombia

44. Violence, measured in terms of the homicide rate, worsened and became more widespread throughout the territory between 1990 and 1998. This indicator rose significantly throughout the period in practically half the country's municipalities. In the last year, the homicide rate has been estimated at 60 per 100 000 inhabitants.

45. According to a study carried out by the Social Mission[16] of the National Planning Department, municipalities where violence was growing recorded a homicide rate of 94 per 100 000 inhabitants in 1993, 36% higher than the average in municipalities where violence was not increasing. In the latter the rate was 69 homicides per 100 000, which in any case is three times the Latin American average. The following points need to be borne in mind.

46. With regard to the number of homicides, the tendency is to believe that criminality is worse in urban areas, but according to the statistics, violence is not concentrated in major urban centres, but distributed across the country.

47. One theory which is often put forward is that conditions of poverty provide fertile ground for violence. The results of the study, on the other hand, show that the homicide rate is not positively related to greater levels of poverty. On the contrary, there is a direct relation between the homicide rate and wealth, for each of the groups of municipalities and in general. In other words, there is a greater probability of encountering violence in municipalities which offer new possibilities of accumulating wealth.

48. While poverty appears to be inversely related to the degree of violence, the correlation between inequality[17] and violence appears to be positive. The impact of an increase in inequality is ten times greater in a group where violence is rising than in a group where violence is decreasing.

49. Another interesting finding is the inverse relation between violence and human capital, measured in terms of the average years of education of persons in the household. Municipalities with better human capital, on average, have lower rates of violence. An increase of 1% in the average educational level would appear to reduce the homicide rate by 3.5% in the rising violence group, and by 3% across the country. This idea is supported by Juan Luis Londoño (1988)[18], who found that one of the greatest risk factors when it comes to encountering violent situations is a low standard of education.

50. An empirical check of some of the theories regarding factors related to violence leads to the following conclusions:

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[16] Alfredo Sarmiento and Lida M. Becerra. "Análisis de las relaciones entre violencia y equidad".

[17] Inequality in this case is measured not only in terms of income but also taking account of all the variables listed in the Quality of Life Index.

[18] Juan Luis Londoño (1998) "Epidemiología económica de la violencia urbana".

- Violence tends to recur with the greatest probability in sectors or areas with a high potential for wealth accumulation and a weak State presence. However, in areas and population groups with high levels of violence, the poor tend to be the main victims;

- Existing inequalities forcing individuals and families to make strenuous efforts to attain acceptable living conditions tend to favour the recurrence of violence;

- The presence of armed groups is a factor that generates violence.

51. A few positive elements have also been identified, which may provide possible clues for a solution.

II. RIGHT TO SELF-DETERMINATION (art. 1)

52. See Colombia's previous report.

III. MEASURES AIMED AT THE EFFECTIVE IMPLEMENTATION OF RIGHTS RECOGNIZED IN THE COVENANT - LIMITATIONS (arts. 2, 3, 4 AND 5)

A. Social expenditure 1990-1997[19]

53. In the period 1990-1997, the proportion of GDP accounted for by social expenditure roughly doubled, from 8.21% to 15.21%.

54. In conformity with the 1991 Constitution, the proportion of total State expenditure taken up by social expenditure increased in the period 1990-1997 from 27% to 43%.

55. As a result of the considerable effort made in the social sector in the decade of the 1990s, Colombia, whose social expenditure was moderate at the start of the decade compared with the other Latin American countries and below average for the region, moved up into the group of countries with high levels of social expenditure and above the regional average.

56. In the period 1990-1997, priority was given to the health and housing sectors, where expenditure tripled, and secondly to the areas of social security, water supplies and other services, where expenditure doubled. The education sector took up 50% of social expenditure but its growth rate remained below that of total expenditure.

57. This meant that social expenditure became more heavily weighted towards health, with a proportionate reduction in expenditure of education. While in 1990, 38% of social expenditure went on education and 15% on health, by 1997 the emphasis was reversed, with only 29% being spent on education and 24% on health.

58. In terms of legislation, Act No. 60/93 confirmed the new shift of expenditure towards the social sectors, subject to a policy of focused resource allocation and a devolution of powers, financing as little as possible of territorial sectoral investment from national tax revenues and granting fiscal incentives for investment in education and health. More detailed information on this subject is given later on in this report.

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[19] Sarmiento, Delgado, Reyes (1999). "Servicios Sociales Básicos en Colombia", Initiativa 20/20.

B. Distribution of public social expenditure by income level

1. Health

59. Public health expenditure may be broken down according to the type of health service provided by State institutions to persons insured under the subsidized health scheme. Under the Colombian system, individuals may use State hospitals on a paying basis. Total expenditure on hospital care is more evenly distributed between quintiles because the more complicated operations tend to be carried out in university hospitals, which are mostly State run. In the maternity area, expenditure tends to favour lower income groups, partly because poorer people on average have more children, and partly because richer people prefer to use private facilities. The demand for services such as dentistry, surgery and cures tends to be greater among persons in the higher quintiles, and expenditure in that area is concentrated on them, because the more expensive and less essential services such as orthodontics, plastic surgery or others are not included in the Compulsory Health Plan (POS).

2. Education

60. Expenditure on basic education follows a progressive distribution, that is to say lower income groups receive a greater proportion of public expenditure, especially in primary schooling. In the case of higher education, distribution is regressive to the extent that expenditure is concentrated on the higher income quintiles: 40% of persons belonging to the higher quintiles attend public institutions, despite the fact that they could afford to study in private ones. Only 12% of the poorest 40% attend university, and out of those 60% attend private universities and pay for their own education.

3. Public expenditure on basic social services[20]

61. In the period 1990-1997, national expenditure on basic social services doubled in terms of 1996 dollars. While at the beginning of the 1990s per capita expenditure was US$ 63, by 1997 the figure had increased to US$ 153 as a result of the increase in overall expenditure and its higher proportion within social expenditure. This proportion of total expenditure rose from 12.30% in 1990 to 16.07% in 1997. As a proportion of social expenditure, expenditure on basic social services rose from 41% in 1990 to 45% in 1997.

62. The highest proportion on average of expenditure on basic social services is accounted for by the basic education sector, which averaged 59.60%, followed by primary health care with 18.32%, nutrition with 14.36% and family planning with 3.23%.

4. Composition of expenditure on basic social services

a) Basic education

63. In 1990, the State's per capita expenditure on basic education came to US$ 39 (1996 dollars), and in 1997 to US$ 71. This increase was due mainly to the policy of decentralization initiated in Colombia, which transferred the administration of education services to local authorities, together with the corresponding financial resources. The proportion of GDP spent on education rose from 1.8% in 1980 to 2.9% in 1997. The trends in recent years for health and education have gone different ways; while spending on education declined proportionately from 1993 onwards, health spending rose by more than

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[20] Basic social services are defined as basic education and primary care in terms of health, nutrition, family planning, drinking water and basic sanitation.

50% in the same period as a result of the introduction of the new law on social security (Act No. 100 of 1993).

b) Basic health

64. Per capita expenditure on basic primary health care quadrupled between 1990 and 1997. This increase was related to the introduction of Act No. 100 and the application of constitutional norms. In 1990, it amounted to US$ 10, in 1992 to US$ 9, but in 1997 to over US$ 41.

65. The proportion of total government expenditure going on basic health doubled from 2% to 4%, and as a proportion of basic social services rose from 16% in 1990 to 27% in 1996. These figures are reflected in the sector's increased proportion of GDP, which rose from 0.57% in 1990 to 1.87% in 1997.

c) Water and sanitation

66. Expenditure on water and sanitation increased steadily from 1990 to 1997. Per capita expenditure of US$ 2.85 in 1990 rose to US$ 9.86 by 1997. The proportion of total expenditure going on water and sanitation rose from 0.5% in 1990 to 1.3% in 1997.

d) Fiscal policies for social development

67. In 1993, the social security system was showing signs of deterioration and social inequality. The system provided coverage to only 21% of the population, compared with an average of 45% coverage for Latin America as a whole. The inappropriateness and inefficiency of the services provided by over 1000 social welfare institutions throughout the country were striking, and to make matters worse, the system was running on an overall financial deficit.

68. In order to improve the situation, the country introduced radical reforms in its health and pensions system, with Act No. 100 of 1993. Thanks to this reform, and in view of the need to extend the system's coverage, the resources of the health sector were increased through a 12% rise in contributions. At the same time, the Health Guarantee and Solidarity Fund was launched with a view to subsidizing demand, including that of the indigenous population, while providing care for displaced persons, victims of traffic accidents and natural disasters or terrorism, as well as running health promotion and prevention programmes.

69. For pensions, the reform allowed an increase in revenues through higher contributions, which were raised from 8% to 13.5%. From the year 2014 onwards, the retirement age for women was raised from 55 to 57 years and for men from 60 to 62.

70. From January 1996, both public sector and private sector employees were covered by the General Occupational Hazards System.

71. In 1993, Act No. 60 established a new distribution of powers and fiscal resources between the State and territorial authorities on the basis of the notion of tax appropriation (Situado Fiscal) and the allocation of a share of current national revenues to the municipalities.

72. What is known as the "Situado Fiscal" (tax appropriation) is the percentage of current national income transferred to the departments, the Capital District of Bogotá and the Special Districts of Cartagena, Santa Marta and Barranquilla, for spending on public education and health services. By the

fiscal year 1996, this tax appropriation amounted to 24.5% of current national revenues, after a period of steady growth since the system was introduced in 1994, when it accounted for 23% of current revenues.

73. The territorial distribution of the tax appropriation is based on criteria such as the number of users and potential users of education and health services, the index of unsatisfied basic needs and per capital territorial income, with a percentage being distributed equally between all territorial entities.

74. Out of the total appropriation for each department or district, at least 60% is earmarked for education and 20% for public health.

75. The fiscal resources derived from the municipalities' share of current national revenues are intended to finance activities in the sectors of education, health, housing, justice, physical education, recreation, sport and culture, as well as grants for the joint financing of land purchases, amongst others.

76. Under Act No. 60 of 1993, the share going to municipalities should rise from 15% of current national revenues in the fiscal year 1994 to 22% for the year 2001.

77. The distribution of current national revenues will take into account the degree of relative poverty of each municipality, the number of inhabitants with unsatisfied basic needs, the number of inhabitants of each municipality as a proportion of the total population of the country and the fiscal efficiency of each local administration.

78. Under Act No. 344 of 1996, territorial authorities have to adopt plans to extend the coverage of health services, to improve the quality of management of those services and to shift the financing of the services from a system of subsidized supply to one of subsidized demand, with the aim of focussing health services more on the poor and vulnerable sectors of the population.

79. For the same reason, the Act stipulated that the tax appropriation and revenues transferred to territorial authorities, subject to a few discounts, should be increasingly used to subsidize demand, in a proportion initially equivalent to 15% in 1997, rising to 60% in the fiscal year 2000.

e) New ways of financing social programmes

80. The concept of solidarity embodied in the funds (the Health Guarantee and Solidarity Fund and the Pension Solidarity Fund), which were set up for the purpose under Act No. 100 of 1993, opened up access to social security for population groups which until then had been completely excluded from State benefits.

81. Under the Health and Social Security System (FOSYGA), the Health Guarantee and Solidarity Fund is a trust account opened with the Ministry of Health, without legal personality or staff of its own. It covers the following sub-accounts:

- Internal tax system compensation account: this is the means by which the resources approved by the tax system for health care institutions to guarantee the provision of health services for their members and other beneficiaries are discounted from tax returns;

- Health subsidy system solidarity account: designed to allow the poor and vulnerable population to join the subsidized scheme of the health and social security system;

- Health promotion account: intended as a means of financing activities in the areas of health education, information and promotion, as well as secondary and tertiary sickness prevention;

- Disaster and traffic accident risk insurance account: aimed at guaranteeing full care for victims who have suffered physical injury as a direct consequence of traffic accidents, terrorist actions or disasters;

- In order to finance education and health through the tax appropriation system, a system was designed using a series of variables to calculate transfers of tax revenues, introducing weighting factors that take account of regional needs, service efficiency and the ability to collect funds locally. The purpose of this system is to ensure a more efficient distribution of resources to the regions;

- The Pension Solidarity Fund was set up under article 25 of Act No. 100 of 1993 with the aim of subsidizing contributions paid into the general pension scheme by salaried or independent workers of the rural and urban sectors, who have insufficient means to pay their entire contribution. The fund is financed with resources from a supplementary 1% contribution levied on salaries of general pension scheme subscribers, whose subscription base is equal to or greater than four times the legal monthly minimum wage, plus any financial returns of liquidity surpluses.

f) Social Solidarity Network

82. The Social Solidarity Network is part of a national strategy to combat poverty. This strategy is based on the recognition that the benefits of economic growth have not led to improved welfare for the majority of the Colombian population. To this extent, social policy must be supplemented with a form of direct social action, exclusively benefiting the poorest and most vulnerable sector of the country's population.

83. For the purposes of this strategy, poverty is defined in a broad sense, involving not only a lack of services or lack of opportunities for earning income, but also the inability of communities to defend their interests, to express their needs in the form of proposals, and to become organized and mobilized around those proposals in the search for solutions.

84. In the light of this strategy, the network's action was aimed initially at caring for the vulnerable sectors of the population by involving them in different programmes and in processes of social participation as a basic approach to overcoming poverty.

85. Since it was established, the network has endeavoured to fit into the State's social policy, in an effort to complement rather than replace education, health, social security and housing programmes by setting up new tools for implementing social policy. Most of the time, the network's programmes were implemented by various national institutions, while the network's own function consisted primarily in facilitating the target population's access to existing sectoral strategies and programmes[21].

86. In accordance with the implementation strategy of social investment funds in Latin America, the network was established as a transitional programme, whose scope was to be reduced as the economic and social strategy produced the expected results. So far, however, on account of the severity of the

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[21] In 1995, the network set up a system of external monitoring for the purpose of evaluating the effects of its policies and programmes and identifying whatever adjustments were necessary to improve its performance. This evaluation concentrated chiefly on the management of the network, excluding the social impact of the policies and projects and their effect on poverty levels. It is hoped that the latter type of consideration may be introduced in the future into the evaluation of the network's programmes.

social crisis the country has been experiencing, far from being able to reduce its activities, the network has actually generated new areas of focus, for example, in favour of persons displaced by violence.

87. The network designed a management model which focused investment on vulnerable sectors by developing tools for collecting and analysing vulnerability indicators. Bearing in mind the principle of participation and in order to promote social integration, this management model encouraged the joint selection of projects and beneficiaries, while promoting social participation and control in the formulation, implementation and monitoring of projects.

88. In order to achieve an impact on its target population, the network's action was concentrated on 14 programmes, grouped into three social policy action areas, defined around strategic objectives.

89. The network's priorities as regards investing in social capital to improve income generation were centred on setting up opportunities for occupations that afford qualifications and an outlet towards sustainable projects, as well as on alternative forms of social improvement and job training suited to a population in conditions of acute vulnerability.

90. While initially the Solidarity Network succeeded in implementing a successful management model, which enabled it to focus its activities on the vulnerable sector of the population, it did not really tackle the underlying structural factors related to poverty and vulnerability, nor did it make an effort to understand the roots of discrimination. As a result, its impact in terms of social integration was limited.

91. Some of the network's programmes are listed and described below:

- Food support programme for children in community family welfare homes: The objective of this Social Solidarity Network programme was to improve the nutritional conditions of 890 000 boys and girls housed in community welfare homes. Between 1994 and 1998, investments totalled 192 590 million pesos. Coverage was extended to 65 848 community homes caring for 987 720 children;

- Rural food bonus programme: The aim of this network programme was to help improve the living conditions of rural children under seven years of age, especially those suffering from malnutrition, through actions in the areas of health, food and education. During the period 1994-1998, sums of the order of 25 125 million pesos were invested for approximately 95 000 children. One of the major achievements of the programme was to reach a population which had never been addressed by other programmes, thus providing a direct response to 95 000 boys and girls in rural areas;

- Urban housing programme: A family housing subsidy programme launched by the network, costing 248 398 million pesos between 1995 and 1998 and benefiting 111 656 families, partly funded by contributions from the Urban Infrastructure Cofinancing Fund (FIU) and the Social Investment Fund (FIS);

- Indigenous programme: During the period 1994-1998, the Social Solidarity Network launched 161 strategic projects with 116 indigenous organizations in the microregions worth 4 580 million pesos. A total of 2 398 804 working days were paid for a cost of 5 997 million pesos and pre-investment studies were carried out for a cost of 700 million pesos;

- Support programme for collectors of recyclable material: From 1996 to 1998, this programme ran projects supported by contributions of 1 881 million pesos from the Social

Solidarity Network and 968 million of municipal cofinancing, for the benefit of 11 295 persons;

- Programme of care for street dwellers: The Social Solidarity Network began this programme in 1996 with the idea of catering fully for the needs of children, young people and adults living in the street. A total of 1 925 million pesos was invested for 6 503 beneficiaries;

- Recreation programme: This was aimed at the construction, recovery, adaptation, improvement and funding of community or institutional areas suitable for sporting, cultural and recreational activities in marginal locations throughout the country. The programme spent 3 258 million pesos in more than 500 municipalities in the country;

- Programme for the support of sporting and artistic talents: This programme offered individual and collective grants for the artistic or sports training of young people between the ages of 12 and 18 belonging to strata 1 and 2 showing promise in such activities. Through the Social Solidarity Network, this programme invested 3 017 million pesos, obtaining 555 million in cofinancing from the municipalities, to cater for 3 030 beneficiaries in 19 municipalities in the country;

- Care for the population displaced by internal armed conflict: In recent years forced displacement has increased in Colombia as a result of its close connection with armed conflict and the territorial spread of the latter's limits.

92. In 1995, the Colombian Government, aware of the magnitude and importance of this problem, prepared Document No. 2804 of the National Economic and Social Policy Council (CONPES), in which it set out the National Programme for the General Welfare of Persons Displaced by Violence, aimed at neutralizing the dynamics of violence and mitigating its effects on the personal integrity of displaced persons. In theory, the proposed strategy was intended to favour voluntary return or resettlement, by creating conditions of minimum sustainability for the social and economic reintegration of returnees, and for the comprehensive development of both outflow and inflow areas. In 1997, another CONPES document, No. 2924, was prepared, establishing the National System for the General Welfare of Persons Displaced by Violence, to be coordinated by the Presidential Advisory Commission on the Displaced Population[22]. Later, Act No. 387 of 1997, partially regulated by Decree No. 173 of 1998, established the present legal framework for the Policy of General Welfare of the Displaced Population as well as guidelines for preventing the forced displacement of that population and providing for their care, protection, resettlement and socio-economic stability.

93. While in formal terms these rules and policy documents express a desire to combat forced displacement as part of a more general State policy, their implementation in practice has suffered from institutional, legal and operational limitations which have prevented them from responding effectively to the magnitude the problem has assumed.

94. In view of this situation, the Government of President Pastrana made the displaced population part of its peace strategy outlined in the National Development Plan. The main problems were identified and a Plan of Action was put forward, placing the emphasis on prevention and return as the central objectives of government action in favour of the displaced population. This Plan of Action was incorporated in document No 3057 of 1999 approved by the National Economic and Social Policy

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[22] This Advisory Commission was set up under Decree No. 1165 of 1997. In practice, its functions were taken over by the Social Solidarity Network.

Council (CONPES). The CONPES document also advocated reorganizing and simplifying the institutional framework, upgrading information systems and improving prevention mechanisms and instruments (by introducing an early warning system and improving local security and rehabilitation in order to reduce the vulnerability of local inhabitants), while promoting protective measures, humanitarian care (based on strategic alliances between the State, NGOs and international agencies), and return and resettlement under stable socio-economic conditions.

95. The Social Security Network was put in charge of coordinating efforts to improve the State's ability to tackle prevention and forced displacement. The policies and responses of the Colombian Government with regard to displacement have been outlined in Documents CONPES 2804 of 1995 and 2925 of 1997, Act No. 387 of 1997 and Decree No. 173 of 1998. The strategy has sought to emphasize the voluntary return or resettlement of the displaced population, the recovery of an economic basis for families and the development of both outflow and inflow areas.

96. From the start, the Government has introduced actions to assist the return and relocation of the displaced population, while improving emergency humanitarian aid and strengthening the system for dealing comprehensively with displacement.

97. Under the coordination of the Social Solidarity Network, various return projects have been launched, such as those benefiting the communities of the Cacarica river basin, in Riosucio, the villages El Diamante, Tolobá, Cascajal and Divino Niño, in the municipality of Tierralta; the district of Carmen de Cucú, in San Pablo; the municipality of Carepa; the localities of Mesopotamia and Pueblo Nuevo, in Carmen de Atrato; and the district of Playón de Orozco, in the municipality of El Piñón. These programmes are supporting food security, production and housing projects.

98. The return scheme which has had the greatest impact has been the Cacarica river basin project. The families left their land 32 months ago and are currently settled in Turbo, in the districts of Bocas de Atrato and Bahía Cupica. The return programme includes a housing project, support for environmentally sustainable production, clearance of the rivers Perancho and Peranchito, the establishment of a courthouse with a civil security system, and the issue of collective title to 103 000 hectares of land.

99. Support was also provided for the immediate return of 4 000 persons from La Gabarra and, with the backing of the Middle Magdalena Development and Peace Programme, the return of a further 10 000 persons from southern Bolívar, who had moved to Barrancabermeja. In the latter case, as the return was being organized a procedure was established for consulting the population involved, leading to the joint identification of needs and actions incorporated within a broader regional development plan.

100. In cases where the displaced persons were unable to return for reasons of security or because they were already settled in rural or urban areas, buildings have been acquired, through the Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA), for rehousing the population in order to complete the steps already undertaken. These operations were conducted in coordination with the Ministry of Agriculture, local authorities and the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC). The projects concerned, centred on developing productive activities and providing housing, are currently being conducted in Altamira, Jerusalem, San Marino, Ataco, Armero, Guayabal, Icononzo, Rioblanco and Roncesvalles.

101. A further measure has been, through production-related projects, to support the socio-economic stabilization of 350 families who voluntarily requested resettlement in Bogotá. Arrangements were also made to relocate 100 families in Quibdó. In the latter case, a temporary housing project and support for productive activities will soon be initiated, in association with the Colombian Red Cross, the Spanish

Red Cross and the local authorities. Lastly indigenous families of Arwacos coming from Sierra Nevada were resettled in a building in Soledad, Atlántico, with help to set up small trading facilities.

102. In terms of humanitarian assistance, it is worth noting that in the early stages of the displacement, the Solidarity Network, working hand in hand with other institutions, has provided food aid, temporary accommodation and health care in the municipalities of Carmen de Bolívar, Mutatá, Turbo, Malambo, Dabeiba, Bogotá, San Jacinto, Curumaní, Juradó, Bahía Solano, Cabuyaro, Cúcuta, Carmen de Chucurí, Ibagué, Roncesvalles, Buenaventura, Buga and Jamundí. Cooperation agreements are also being signed with the Colombian Scouts Association in Bogotá and with the Colombian Red Cross to provide assistance initially in Medellín, Cali, Quibdó and Soacha.

103. With regard to institutional improvements, in the last year, as a backup for government action to deal with forced displacement and to achieve efficient coordination between all participating entities, the following innovations are worth noting:

104. By Decree No. 489 of 1999, the Social Solidarity Network was put in charge of coordinating the National System for the General Welfare of the Displaced Population. By Decree No. 1547 of August 1999, the National Displaced Population Welfare Fund was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Social Solidarity Network.

105. The National Displaced Population Register was transferred from the Ministry of the Interior to the Social Solidarity Network. The Register is being operated on a decentralized basis, through departmental branches.

106. A Joint Technical Unit was set up by the Social Solidarity Network and the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with a view to providing a qualified technical body to assist with the development and launch of operational schemes. The objective is to make available immediate support in terms of emergency humanitarian assistance, legal development, a registration system, information, monitoring and evaluation, as well as feedback advice, relocation measures and international cooperation. In addition, two agreements of intent were signed (dated 17 October 1996 and 28 January 1999) to admit UNHCR cooperation for the treatment of displacement on the country's frontiers with Venezuela, Panama and Ecuador.

107. Two new subregional branches of the Social Solidarity Network are being set up in Barrancabermeja and Apartadó to deal with displacement in the Magdalena Medio and Urabá districts.

108. Displaced Population Welfare Units are being established and consolidated in Quibdó, Medellín, Cali, Soacha, Santa Marta, Cartagena, Barranquilla and Villavicencio.

109. Approximately 7 500 million pesos have been invested, 5 600 million by the Social Solidarity Network, with the rest coming from outside contributions.

110. Looking towards the future, according to its new mandate, the Solidarity Network is a presidential strategy aimed at encouraging social participation, in order to:

- Promote further decentralization;

- Generate a greater commitment on the part of local authorities in the management of their own development;

- Consolidate new institutional models for the handling and control of social policies in territorial entities, giving priority attention to the most vulnerable population groups.

111. In order to fulfil this mandate, the network concentrated on strengthening social capital as one of its principles of action. According to this principle, institutions should aim to produce a greater capacity, through beneficiaries and other social agents, for local authorities themselves to assume responsibility for managing and launching whatever initiatives are required to solve the problems of their own development. The network for its part will actively promote equal opportunities and social justice, on the basis of a social approach that takes account of differences between groups and remains critical of any forms of injustice.

112. This search for justice goes beyond issues of distribution and equal access to goods and services, by emphasizing the empowerment of disadvantaged groups, in an effort to extend their field of opportunities and social influence.

113. On the other hand, following its tradition and taking advantage of its acquired capacities, the network will extend and improve its methods of popular consultation and citizen participation. The improvement of these approaches will be based on a proactive effort to strengthen grassroot community organizations and on the latter's ability to identify their collective development interests and to coordinate their action with that of other organizations and public bodies.

114. Beneficiaries' meetings and inspection units have been set up for each project, in response to the need to ensure transparency in the implementation of projects and the informed participation of present and potential beneficiaries of the projects.

115. At the same time, supervision and control committees, amongst other mechanisms, have been set up to facilitate and monitor exchanges between civil society and State control bodies, and between the latter and local authorities responsible for implementation.

116. Lastly, in order to promote a model of participative public management within implementing agencies, new management committees and technical committees have also been established with a view to ensuring coordination with municipal development plans.

C. Impact of social expenditure

1. Poverty[23]

a) Economic inequality and monetary poverty in Colombia[24]

117. Table 1 shows the main indicators of monetary poverty and economic inequality for the country as a whole, for urban areas and for rural areas for the period 1995-1997[25].

b) Incidence of poverty

118. Between 1995 and 1997, the incidence of poverty in the country (calculated in terms of a poverty line) declined from 55% in 1995 to 53.8% in 1996. In 1997, the indicator rose again to 54.2%, equivalent to 21.7 million persons living in conditions of poverty.

119. For the urban areas, the index rose from 42.5% in 1995 to 45.9% in 1996 and remained just under that level at 45.5% in 1997.

120. In rural areas, the incidence of poverty increased from 68.9% in 1995 to 73.4% in 1996 and 76.4% in 1997. These figures indicate that not only has there been a growing concentration of the poor population in rural areas, but also that the tendency has become more pronounced.

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[23] Criteria are defined to identify the poor population according to the concept of poverty used. Poverty as a social phenomenon is multidimensional, comprising economic, social, political and cultural dimensions, amongst others. The household surveys carried out by the DANE provide a means of evaluating the socio-economic dimension of poverty. This dimension may be estimated by means of indicators: either direct indicators, such as the living conditions index (ICV) or indirect, such as the poverty line index (LP). Direct indicators, such as those that evaluate standards of welfare and living conditions, portray the quality of life. The advantage of the living conditions index is that it provides a more accurate measure of the standards of living attained and shows the degree to which basic necessities have been satisfied, such as adequate housing, education, health and basic housing sanitation. The drawback of the indicator is that it allocates a higher weighting to the housing variable (over 50%) than to human capital (education). Indirect indicators are based on income (such as per capita household income), which is compared with a standard level of income equivalent to the value of the poverty line. This indicator can be used to observe the impact of economic activity (economic growth rate) on the incomes of individuals and households. It is limited, however, in so far as it evaluates poverty only as a function of income (poverty being here interpreted as monetary, although as a variable it can be affected by many distortions, such as undervaluation) and starts from the assumption that poor people spend primarily on food. In other words, the advantage of poverty indicators is that they provide an evaluation of the impact of economic and social policies on the poor population, i.e. they are impact indicators. With regard to their limitations, these indicators exclude the possibility of studying other variables by which poverty is determined, such as those defining the capacities of individuals and families.

[24] Based on Nina B Esteban. and Ana I. Aguilar. "Amartya Sen y el estudio de la desigualdad económica y la pobreza monetaria en Colombia, 1978-1997".

[25] For the purposes of the Household Survey data, the term "rural" differs from that used in the census. In the survey, this term refers to: a) all dispersed population, b) all inhabited centres, except for municipal seats: hamlets, administrative jurisdictions and police inspectorates; c) municipal seats with a population of less than 10 000 inhabitants; d) seats with a population greater than 10 000 inhabitants where the percentage of the population is less than half that of the total municipal population, where the proportion of the workforce employed in agriculture is less than 50% and where more than 20% of the population live in housing without proper facilities.

121. Moreover, if the two types of area are compared, it will be found that the ratio of rural poor to urban poor has increased significantly, since in 1991 for every 100 urban poor there were 144 rural poor, while in 1996 this ratio rose to 167 rural poor for every 100 urban poor. This would indicate a growing impoverishment of the countryside and its increasingly unfavourable position in relation to the towns.

122. As far as conditions of extreme poverty are concerned, it may be observed that in 1997 two out of every ten Colombians had income below the extreme poverty line (LI)[26]; that is to say, almost 8.3 million people, two-thirds of whom live in rural areas, do not obtain an income that covers the cost of a basic food basket. According to residential areas, the incidence of extreme poverty is relatively more pronounced in rural areas of the country than in urban areas; in the former, 43.9% of the total rural population, i.e. 4.8 million persons, live in conditions of extreme poverty. In urban areas, the incidence of extreme poverty is less acute: 12.1% of the urban population, i.e. 3.42 million persons, live in conditions of extreme poverty (see Table 1).

c) Poverty gap and intensity

123. The intensity of poverty is calculated on the basis of two indicators shown in Table 1: the *poverty gap*, which is equivalent to the percentage gap between income and poverty line; and *poverty intensity*, which is equivalent to the GT1 index and which takes into account the weighting of the poor population as a percentage of the total population, as well as the income deficit of poor people.

124. According to 1997 data, for all the poor to reach the poverty line, not only must their income be increased by 45% but distribution must simultaneously be optimized. In terms of 1997 pesos, this means that 49 447 pesos a month would be needed for each poor individual to raise the monthly income to 109 883.9 pesos, which corresponded to the poverty line at that time. This means a transfer of approximately of US$1.1 per day for each poor person in the country.

125. Table 1 shows that the poor population's income gap increased overall from 43.4% in 1995 to 45.0% in 1997.

126. The urban sector in the period 1995-1997 starts from an income deficit of 33.4% in 1995, rising to 41.3% in 1997. In the countryside, on the other hand, the gap declines from 51.8% to 50.3%. The indications are that the poor population's income deficit in the last 15 years had either remained the same or in some cases has worsened.

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[26] The extreme poverty line (LI) is equal to the monetary value of the basic food basket. LP = 2.5 * LI.

Table 1

Trends of poverty and inequality measurements by area

Area	Poverty indicator	1995	1996	1997
National	Incidence, $\alpha=0$	0.550	0.538	0.542
	Gap	0.434	0.473	0.450
	Intensity. $\alpha=1$	0.233	0.254	0.248
	Severity. $\alpha=2$	0.143	0.160	0.164
	Sen index	0.331	0.346	0.375
	Gini poor	0.320	0.320	0.328
	Gini national	0.556	0.561	0.540
Urban	Incidence. $\alpha=0$	0.425	0.459	0.455
	Gap	0.334	0.398	0.413
	Intensity. $\alpha=1$	0.142	0.172	0.188
	Severity. $\alpha=2$	0.078	0.093	0.111
	Sen index	0.213	0.241	0.293
	Gini poor	0.250	0.267	0.250
	Gini urban	0.524	0.529	0.599
Rural	Incidence. $\alpha=0$	0.689	0.734	0.764
	Gap	0.518	0.531	0.503
	Intensity. $\alpha=1$	0.357	0.354	0.402
	Severity. $\alpha=2$	0.230	0.241	0.299
	Sen index	0.467	0.468	0.466
	Gini poor	0.330	0.367	0.319
	Gini rural	0.494	0.526	0.570

Source: Social Mission Poverty Study calculations, DNP, based on the DANE National Household Survey in September each year.

127. The upshot is that the urban poor on average have to increase their income by a third merely to reach the poverty line. The 8.8 million rural poor, on the other hand, have to double their income, because their income deficit is 50% below the rural poverty line. Once again, the income gap is moving to the detriment of the rural sector. While the rural gap in 1995 was 56%, it is nowadays 25% above that, which indicates that both urban income and rural income are receding further and further away from the poverty line.

128. To sum up, it is not only that there are proportionately more poor people in the countryside than in urban areas, but that the situation of the former individually has worsened compared with their poor

equivalents in the towns. This explains why there is such a strong incentive to emigrate from extreme poverty in rural areas to the poverty of the towns.

d) Inequality and the Sen index

129. How poor are the poor, and how equal or unequal are the poor? The Sen index can provide an answer to these questions by building a comprehensive indicator attributing weightings to incidence, gap and inequality within the poor group. In the case of Colombia, this index shows an increase in the period 1995-1997 from 0.331 to 0.375, which are levels close to those recorded in the 1980s.

130. In the rural area, the index fell slightly from 46.7% in 1995 to 46.6% in 1997. The lowest levels of inequality among the poor are found in the urban area, where the index increased from 21.3% in 1995 to 29.3% in 1997.

131. In other words, as a result of the increase in the number of poor people, the widening of the gap and the loss of income, the poor have become more equal at a lower level. This tallies with the results of the Gini coefficient, another inequality index which has been calculated for Colombia. In 1995 and 1997, the Gini coefficient remained around 0.32.

132. The Amartya Sen poverty indicators help to understand the magnitude of the challenge facing Colombian society, which is to struggle unremittingly against poverty and inequality in the search for a new, more egalitarian model of development, where all can participate in accordance with their abilities.

133. The new social indicators should shed a fresh light on the living conditions and standards of the population. The Sen and FGT indices measure monetary poverty and economic inequality (based on the household income method) and help to assess the impact of economic and social policies on the poor and extremely poor population.

e) Poverty, inequality and exclusion in Colombia

134. The economic models applied in Colombia by the last two governments (1991-1997) emphasized the search for greater economic and human capital growth, linked to an increase in public social expenditure. However, while public social expenditure rose considerably, the poverty indices improved only slightly.

135. According to the quality of life survey carried out in 1997, the percentage of poor population measured according to unsatisfied basic needs fell from 32.7% in 1993 to 26.9% in 1997. This implies an acceleration of the decrease in absolute terms. While in the period 1985-1993 the number of poor people fell by some 800 000, in the period 1993-1997 it dropped by a further 1.4 million. The population with an unsatisfied basic needs index of 2 or more fell from 13.5% to 9% in 1997. Out of the 1.4 million, some 400 000 people were living in urban areas and about 1 million in rural areas.

136. On the other hand, the additional revenues required by the poor to reach the poverty line (poverty gap) are fairly substantial. The expenditure gap of the poor is equivalent to 45%, which means that their average income or expenditure covers only 55% of the poverty line. If the poverty gap is to be closed, this would imply perfect focusing backed by investments of approximately 12 billion pesos a year to enable that population of poor people to reach an acceptable income equivalent to the poverty line, plus a further 977 000 million pesos a year to close the gap for the population in conditions of extreme poverty.

137. There is no doubt that inequality of access to social services exists in Colombia at different levels – between regions, between rural and urban areas and between socio-economic groups. Access to higher

education has been reserved for the wealthiest 20% of the population. The wealthiest 10% of the population enjoys on average six more years of education than the poorest 10%. In terms of health, 43% of Colombians are not enrolled in any health scheme. In the lowest income decile, over 60% have no cover, while in the wealthiest decile, 84% enjoy some form of health insurance. Such glaring differences as these clearly highlight the importance of focusing policies on the poorest population and introducing a more competitive supply of services, which will allow this group of persons access to the necessary social facilities and offer them at the same time opportunities for their economic integration, including training, the development of skills, education, access to property and information.

f) Quality of Life Index

138. The Quality of Life Index is a practical way of measuring the standard of living of households[27], with coverage at municipal level, which can be used as a guide for transfers. As it is a continuous index, the Quality of Life Index can also take account of the incidence of poverty, its intensity and its distribution[28].

139. Only 11 municipalities fall into the upper vigintile in terms of quality of life, concentrating the greater part of the cumulative index of living conditions and population: thus 1% of the municipalities include 35% of households and 43% of the total cumulative index. The poorest vigintiles contain a higher number of municipalities: the two lowest vigintiles include 222 municipalities (almost 22% of the total) but only 2.6% of living conditions and 5.4% of households.

140. The differences between the lowest and the highest vigintiles are obvious: while the Quality of Life Index of the poorest municipalities comes to only 30.5 on average, that of the wealthiest municipalities is as high as 83.2. Population characteristics also show considerable differences: the number of persons per household is 5.4 in the lowest vigintile, compared with 4.1 in the highest. Average schooling for heads of household in the poorest 124 municipalities is 2.6 grades, 5 years less than the average for the wealthiest 11 municipalities. There are also differences of almost three years in the average age of heads of household and a greater percentage (30%) of children under 6 years of age.

141. As far as access to public services is concerned, inequality is also very marked: the inhabitants of municipalities in the lowest vigintile have no water supply; they do not even have any latrine for the elimination of excreta and they use wood for cooking. Their housing is made out of light materials (earthen floors and walls of zinc, coarse planks or disposable materials). The overcrowding indicator shows that concentrations of more than 5 persons per room are not uncommon in this group of municipalities. In the upper vigintile, the situation is the opposite: households have a fair coverage of public services, in terms of water supply, sewerage and electricity or gas for cooking, while housing is on average built of solid materials.

142. Comparing all the vigintiles, it may be seen that only from the 16th vigintile do the groups of municipalities achieve a Quality of Life Index score above the national average. These 94 municipalities (9.2% of the total) account for 58% of households and 71% of living conditions for the country as a whole. Other characteristics identified by the index show how precarious the living conditions of the

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[27] Using the method advocated by Sen to measure standard of living, it is possible to devise measurements of practical usefulness without the strict characteristics demanded by Arrow for social wellbeing functions, and which do not need to include the motivations of usefulness, wealth and pleasure implicit in those functions.

[28] Poverty studies carried out in Colombia indicate that the Unsatisfied Basic Needs Index has difficulty measuring poverty intensity, the poverty gap and distribution among the poor. It also suffers from serious problems of inclusion and exclusion.

majority of municipalities in the country still are on average: piped water is not the main form of water supply for the lowest 14 vigintiles (88% of municipalities), nor are sewers the main way of eliminating excreta. Although electricity coverage has made substantial progress, the same proportion of municipalities still use odd materials for cooking.

g) Equal rights for women

143. In 1994, Colombia began to seek ways of giving gender issues greater importance in its institutions. A number of national, sectoral and territorial bodies were therefore set up, such as the Advisory Commission on the Equality and Participation of Women (Decree No. 2055 of 1994), the Presidential Secretariat for Women and Gender and the Gender Unit of the Minister Responsible. Both these bodies operated as technical offshoots of the Advisory Commission until the end of 1995, when the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women was created.

144. Under the terms of its mandate, this directorate has established a policy of institutionalizing equal rights for women in the social, economic, political and cultural agenda of the country. This policy is based on equality and equal rights principles that incorporate the specific needs of women in macro policies, that recognize social, cultural and economic differences between men and women and that admit a sexual division of labour from the material, cultural and symbolic point of view.

145. During this decade policies have shifted from a populational approach (where women are treated as a group benefiting from specific actions) to a notion of public policies for women, where priority is given to undertaking positive actions on their behalf. Thus the type of institutional approach which favoured isolated initiatives has been overtaken and replaced by a transversal type of approach, which promotes and supports the inclusion of equal rights for women issues in sectoral policies and programmes.

146. Since 1990, when the process of institutionalizing women and gender issues in the country began, the policy has benefited from a combination of social factors and the political will of governments. Some of the key aspects helping to consolidate the process have included successful claims by women's organizations, guidance and support from international technical cooperation and new constitutional and legal developments in the country.

147. It has been possible in Colombia to observe a greater involvement of women in socio-economic activities and in public affairs, thanks to the modernization in part of policies and institutions and in part of national standards of social justice. There is no doubt that women have benefited from these changes, while they have taken on new tasks and responsibilities, sometimes without the corresponding access to resources and services. The removal of barriers impeding the full participation of women has been the chief objective of institutions for the advancement of women since 1990.

148. In the pursuit of this objective, new policies, programmes and mechanisms have been developed on the basis of various theoretical and programming approaches and different points of view regarding the possible impact of macro policies and the need for specific responses to gender issues. In this respect, progress has been achieved in a new approach to public policies, which have gradually been converting the goal of equal rights for women into practical measures.

149. During the period 1990-1998, successive governments have made praiseworthy efforts to place gender issues on the agenda of public policies. In 1992, the Economic and Social Policy Council (CONPES) approved a comprehensive policy for Colombian women, which was the first time that high level body had undertaken a nationwide policy in favour of women.

150. The National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women was set up under Act No. 188 of 1995 of the 1994-1998 National Development Plan as a special administrative unit, attached to the Administrative Department of the Office of the President of the Republic. The new directorate, which was made administratively independent and provided with its own assets, was responsible for promoting gender policies and, within a broader framework, for promoting coexistence among citizens and contributing, through its specific mandate, towards strengthening the State as the guarantor of the political, civil, economic, social and cultural rights of women.

151. With the creation of the new directorate, a qualitative leap has been taken towards achieving equal rights, since for the first time the country has an institution founded in law for the planning, monitoring and ongoing coordination of measures taken by different bodies in favour of equal rights and participation for women. Its objective is to apply the policy defined by the Economic and Social Policy Council (CONPES) to promote the cause of women in different spheres of society and to incorporate this new cultural perspective in State policies.

152. In accordance with the terms of Decree No. 1440 of 1995, regulating the Act establishing the directorate, the latter's basic objective is, through promotion, technical support and advice, to assist the coordination, planning, programming, monitoring and ongoing development of all the measures taken by national and territorial bodies for the implementation of equal rights policies.

153. The directorate is at present restructuring its relations with territorial bodies to ensure that women's offices take on counselling, coordination and technical support duties in departmental and municipal bodies responsible for implementing the Women's Equal Rights and Participation Policy (EPAM), as a means of ensuring that the latter becomes a cross-sectional policy permanently incorporated in all the country's institutions.

154. The National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women has taken over the efforts made so far by other bodies responsible for promoting women and gender issues. It provided the support required to finalize some pilot programmes and to institutionalize them within the bodies concerned. After carrying out an evaluation, it took over programmes which it considered suited for continuation or expansion, set out guidelines for their activity and developed a work programme to give effect to its duties as the body responsible for promoting research, dissemination and coordination with other bodies and with civil society.

155. From January 1996, the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women, starting from an analysis of the development model and the country's current political and cultural structure, decided to give priority to the areas of education, health, employment, justice and rural development. In each of these areas it has promoted:

a) Management of policies, plans and programmes aimed at the gradual incorporation of equal rights for women. This implies giving practical expression to government policies in favour of women. To achieve this, the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women has been focusing its attention on promoting, consulting, coordinating and providing assistance and technical support to public bodies, so that the latter may develop, plan, execute and evaluate sectoral and territorial policies likely to strengthen equal rights as a basic principle of democracy;

b) Recognition of the rights of women both in legal developments and in State plans and programmes. This task is derived from mandates attributed under the 1991 Constitution, in which decisive importance is attached to disseminating the rights of women under absolute conditions of equality, and to coordinating flexible mechanisms with the institutions responsible in order to protect and

promote women's rights, as unavoidable preconditions to ensure that women may fully exercise their citizenship;

c) Management of policies and programmes aimed at eliminating violence against women. Because such a profound change of attitudes is needed in Colombia with respect to the practice of violence, there is now an urgent need to reconsider this concept of violence against women and the many forms it takes in practice. In order to project a more comprehensive and realistic view of the phenomenon, the directorate has supported the development of theoretical and methodological frameworks, which are close to the daily realities faced by Colombian women and which take account of their everyday needs. The directorate in this respect has made a special effort to extend and improve services providing care for the victims of violence and to support ways of combating impunity. These tasks are pursued in the belief not only that violence affects part of the population, but that the quality of life of all Colombian men and women is diminished to the extent that women are exposed to violence without society intervening to prevent it. The latest legislation aimed at eliminating violence against women includes Act No. 248/95 ratifying the Inter-American Convention on preventing, sanctioning and eradicating violence against women, and, in 1996, Act No. 294 introducing sanctions for violence within the family. One year later, Act No. 360 was approved specifying offences against sexual freedom and human dignity;

d) Equal representation of women in the areas of political and social decisions. This undertaking by the National Directorate on Equal Rights means that the Government has begun to seek ways of ensuring that women can not only elect but also be elected on a representative basis, and allowing them to be present in areas of decision making, planning and the implementation of public policies and political authority;

e) Access to resources, goods and services and in general to better living conditions, as well as training to support women's independence and empowerment and to help them organise actively and exercise leadership in institutional and civil bodies: these are also vital aspects of the quantitative and qualitative changes occurring with respect to the political and civil participation of women.

156. In its search for equal rights and opportunities for women, the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women launched the Programme for the Development of Families Headed by Women. This experimental programme was initiated in Cali in 1990 with the assistance of the FES Foundation, the World Bank for Women of Cali and the financial support of the Ford Foundation. Later, the Office of the President of the Republic, through the Presidential Council for Youth, Women and the Family, and subsequently the Secretariat for Women and Gender, took over the coordination of the programme, adding financial support to extend its coverage to 24 towns. At present, still supported by the same institutions, as well as the Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund, the coordination of the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women and the participation of 26 regional NGOs, the programme is still expanding, with the aim of extending its coverage in some of the towns where it is already operating.

157. By December 1997, the programme had assisted 17 654 women heads of household residing in strata 1 and 2 neighbourhoods, on the basis of loans worth approximately 12 998 million pesos.

158. The programme's portfolio management has been highly satisfactory, with a reported gain of 10.01% in 1997. Thanks to the recovery of funds, the operators have been able to achieve a fast rotation of loans, which was reported to be 18.31 times in 1997.

159. Thanks to those measures, women have come to be considered as creditworthy, which in turn has created an interesting opening for organizations handling credit for the microbusiness sector.

160. In relation to urban distribution, poverty and women in these strata who run their own businesses, it is estimated that a population of 100 000 women should be covered by the programme. With the Inter-American Development Bank's Multilateral Investment Fund grant of US$ 3.5 million to the FES, the aim is to extend coverage to women heads of household who are employed or in domestic service in strata 1 and 2.

161. Where equal rights are concerned, the programme has the following goals:

a) Full development of women. To strengthen the gender identity of women heads of household and workers, to stimulate their self-esteem and leadership and to provide women with tools which can help them tackle whatever problems arise in their day-to-day situation, so that they may improve their work performance and find fulfilment as human beings;

b) Full range of services. To offer institutional and community alternatives for access to social services that will improve conditions for the individual and the home and will alleviate the domestic workload;

c) Promotion and dissemination. To establish a non-traditional form of communication that takes account of the type of occupation and time available to women and develops information strategies with messages that reflect the diversity of gender situations and regional identities and that combine national and local actions;

d) Research. With the participation of women and organizations involved in the programme, to gain greater knowledge of the specific problems women face with a view to planning alternative forms of action;

e) Programme benefits. To implement in practice a methodological approach which combines solutions to economic, technical and personal development needs with other similar programmes, either incorporating them completely or components thereof.

162. The National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women has also been promoting the dissemination of women's rights through publications and events such as:

- Publication and widespread dissemination of Act No. 294 of 1996 against violence within the family;

- Publication, with UNICEF support, of a series of booklets on Colombia's international commitments;

- To celebrate 40 years of women's voting rights in Colombia, a book has been published and disseminated on the human rights of women and another on laws and jurisprudence that defend women's rights;

- Priority has been given to eliminating institutional and cultural barriers to the defence and protection of women's rights; dissemination efforts have therefore been centred on State institutions;

- By launching national and regional campaigns, such as the education and awareness programme on "Problems with the letter a", the directorate has promoted a culture of equality between women and men, through radio, television and the press;

- The directorate, in conjunction with the National Registry and the Office for Rural Women of the Ministry of Agriculture, launched a campaign for the issue of identity documents for rural women and their children, in the departments of Nariño, Sucre, Córdoba, Magdalena, Bolívar and Cesar;

- The Presidential Advisory Council for Human Rights has also carried out a series of actions to disseminate women's rights, especially through a project to promote human and reproductive rights aimed at dealing with and preventing violence against women;

- The Office of the Ombudsman for the dissemination of the Covenant has held workshops attended by civil servants to disseminate and promote women's rights.

163. The Ministry of Education (MEN), and the Women's Offices operating under different organizational schemes from the Office of the President of the Republic and the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women, have encouraged institutional efforts aimed at introducing equal rights for women in education. A series of tasks have been developed as a result, including research and consultancy work documenting the subject of equality between women and men in the educational sector, with an emphasis on the following topics: performance in State secondary education examinations; revision of the Ministry of Education's Sexual Education Programme; collation of information related to teacher training on the subject of sexual discrimination in schools; and analysis of the National Development Plan aimed at identifying strategic areas of educational policies related to gender equality.

164. Although the Ministry of Education runs a specialized unit dealing with these topics, it has not given it either the hierarchical rank or the logistic support it needs. In order to give its action more effect and with UNESCO's cooperation, the Programme of Equal Rights for Women was launched with the establishment of an internal working group. As part of the policies and programmes, the Ministry and the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women are establishing a short and medium-term plan of action.

165. With regard to programmes, the Ministry of Education has started an interesting scheme to create awareness among and to train officials responsible for promoting the equal rights policy within the Ministry itself, as well as officials of the Departmental Education Secretariats. In addition, the Ministry has designed and published a teacher training manual on sexist contents; it has compiled didactic material produced in Colombia and abroad on gender and education; and it has implemented an experimental methodology for in-service teacher training and has tested it with over 500 educators, directors and university academics.

166. The Ministry of Education, the National Directorate on Equal Rights for Women, the Popular Network for Education among Women (REPEM) and UNICEF are developing a strategy of awareness-creation and incentives for companies producing school textbooks, with a view to introducing changes that will help eliminate sexist stereotypes from school books.

167. New actions and programmes have been launched for the benefit of young girls and women in education. Some of these are targeted at the displaced population: a project aimed at changing educational conditions for the rural population, with special emphasis on the education of peasant women; an education programme for young people and adults that also covers gender equality, based on guidelines from international conferences such as the fifth World Conference on Adult Education held in Hamburg in July 1997; and a project aimed at training teachers in the use of research methodologies to identify the presence of sexist stereotypes in schools and to propose coeducation schemes. The latter measure has led to the preparation of a coeducation guide under the title "A conceptual and methodological proposal for building better alternatives for the training and full development of the

individual[29]. Progress has also been made on a literacy project for women in the rural production sector, which will also become part of the rural education project.

168. Looking ahead, the plan is to prepare a national diagnosis concerning the reproduction of sexist stereotypes in schools and to introduce a coeducational approach in the Institutional Education Projects (PEIs).

169. In the 1998-2002 National Development Plan "Change for building peace", the present Government's commitment and political will in favour of Colombian women was reflected in the adoption of the Plan for Equality between Men and Women. According to the Development Plan:

> "... A plan for equal opportunities between men and women is the means by which the Colombian State proposes to give effect to the constitutional principles of equality and to the international agreements signed by the country regarding the elimination of all forms of discrimination against women. It is to be given effect through the development and formulation in different sectors of strategies aimed at overcoming the limitations and obstacles that impede the participation of women in conditions of equality with men in political, economic, family, social and cultural life, in decision-making positions and in the public authority...[30].

170. The Presidential Advisory Council on Equal Rights for Women is responsible for the joint preparation, implementation and monitoring of the plan. Consultations will be held with women's groups and organizations, and with experts of both sexes in the various subjects covered by the plan.

171. The Plan for Equality will constitute a follow-up to the policy in favour of women adopted by the former administration under the name of Equality and Participation of Women (EPAM). It is hoped that the Plan for Equality will succeed in overcoming some of the practical difficulties that the EPAM ran into, especially by establishing specific budgetary commitments for all the various bodies concerned. The main objectives of the EPAM policy which the Plan for Equality is trying to follow up include:

- To achieve a cultural shift towards a society that is more democratic, equitable and respectful of women;

- To obtain a political commitment on the part of senior officials of government bodies with regard to the policy and its development in all sectors;

- To promote participative planning based on gender equality allowing more equitable access for women to the goods and services of development;

- To promote equal access for women to all forms of education;

- To improve the quality of education for young girls by encouraging their performance in the various areas of knowledge;

- To incorporate the gender focus in the initial and ongoing training of teachers;

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[29] This guide is currently in the course of publication.

[30] Office of the President of the Republic, National Planning Department (1998). 1998-2002 National Development Plan, "Change for building peace".

- To encourage the participation of girls and women in school governance;
- To achieve a reduction in the indices of violence against women;
- To achieve a reduction in the indices of female unemployment and to close salary gaps;
- To encourage the political participation of women in decision-making positions;
- To commit State bodies to respect the rights of women.

172. One of the challenges for this organization in the current administration is supporting and fulfilling the commitments undertaken in the National Development Plan, which explicitly advocate the search for equal opportunities for men and women. The directorate will need as a consequence to strengthen its political and technical status in order to ensure that its policies and programmes achieve the desired impact within the Government's policies.

173. The Ministry of Education is currently developing the project: "Incorporation of the gender perspective in the World Bank's operations: a proposal for the application of the coeducation guide for teachers in the rural education project in Colombia".

174. The National Training Service (SENA) is devising and implementing training strategies that take account of the specific nature of population groups with high unemployment, such as young people and women, in order to facilitate their access to sectors of the economy from which they have traditionally been excluded.

h) Participation of women in political and public life

175. During the 1998 elections, women's participation in elected offices did not exceed 15%. On a personal level, however, some women were able to achieve some remarkable results. In the first round of the presidential elections, a woman obtained 26.77% of the total vote.

176. President Pastrana appointed two women ministers out of a total of 15 ministries, which makes the percentage of female participation 13.3%. In addition, four of the 19 deputy ministerial posts are taken up by women.

177. In the municipal elections, the participation of women increased in municipal councils but diminished in the mayor's offices. Only 50 of the 932 elected mayors are women, representing 5.4% of all offices. Out of 10 397 councillors 1 149 are women, i.e. 11.05%.

178. In the departments, out of 502 representatives at departmental assemblies, 14.14% are women. In parliamentary elections, the participation of women in the Chamber fell (15 out of 161 representatives are women) but increased in the Senate (14 out of the 101 senators are women, i.e. 13.9%). It may be noted that the highest vote among all the parliamentarians was obtained by a woman.

IV. RIGHT TO WORK, RIGHT TO JUST CONDITIONS OF WORK, RIGHT TO FORM TRADE UNIONS, RIGHT TO STRIKE (arts 6,7 and 8)

179. The progress or otherwise achieved in the fulfilment of the various clauses of the Covenant under these headings will need to be seen through the same prism as the situation of violence and macroeconomic problems already analysed in detail in this report.

180. More specifically, it is worth noting that the Government has been undertaking a set of measures aimed at reducing the impact of those two major problems on workers. These measures have included the following.

Plan of action for the promotion and protection of the fundamental and human rights of workers

181. The Ministry of Labour is currently engaged in the planning and coordinated development of a set of effective measures for the promotion and protection of the human rights of Colombian workers, which are reflected in two basic initiatives currently underway: first, the design, adoption and implementation of a plan of action for the promotion and protection of the human rights of workers and fundamental labour rights, with an emphasis on right of association, and second, the establishment and operation of a specialized group to oversee implementation of the plan.

182. The Programme of Action for the promotion and protection of the human rights of workers includes: reactivation of the Standing Inter-Institutional Commission on the Promotion and Protection of the Human Rights of Workers; introduction and integration of the Inter-Institutional Management System for the promotion and protection of the human rights of workers; Programme for the protection and early warning on the violation of the human rights of workers; Project to promote and disseminate the human rights of workers; establishment of a Network of promoters of the human rights of workers; coordination of tripartite regional groups for the promotion of the human rights of workers and a promotional campaign on those rights.

183. The Programme for the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of labour, with emphasis on the right of association, includes: special project for responding to workers' complaints and claims; reactivation of the project for a new culture of labour relations; development and implementation of mechanisms for the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of labour, with emphasis on the right of association; programme for the promotion of the fundamental rights of labour, with emphasis on the right of association; publication of ILO conventions already ratified, and design and publication of instructive and informative booklets on accepted conventions and covenants.

184. The Legislation Adjustment Programme includes: systematic compilation of all international labour conventions ratified by Colombia and their publication; review and analysis of international labour conventions ratified by Colombia in the light of the Colombian legal system; preparation of bills and regulatory decrees for the purpose of adjusting legislation, and review of reform proposals with the ILO.

185. In order to make the management and structure on which its future work in this area will be based more modern and more technically oriented, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security has set up an Internal Coordination Committee for the proposal and implementation of the plan of action for the promotion and protection of the human rights and right of association of workers, attached to the Minister's Office. This Internal Coordination Committee is responsible for deciding, coordinating and monitoring the actions of the following groups: Internal Working Group for the implementation of measures for the promotion and protection of the human rights of workers; Internal Working Group for

the implementation of actions for the promotion and protection of the fundamental rights of labour, with emphasis on the right of association; and the Internal Working Group for the adjustment, compilation and publication of legislation concerning international labour conventions. Each of these groups is responsible for implementing the projects and actions attributed to them in the aforementioned plan.

Programme for the protection of human rights defenders and trade union leaders

186. This programme was launched under the terms of Act No. 418 of 1997, in conformity with former legal provisions for the establishment and mandating of the Administrative Unit of the General Directorate on Human Rights of the Ministry of the Interior, with a view to protecting persons whose lives, integrity, security or liberty are at risk for reasons related to political or ideological violence or to the internal armed conflict the country is experiencing.

187. The social groups specifically benefiting from such protection include the leaders and activists of social, civic and communal, guild, trade union and peasant organizations, as well as ethnic, political, opposition and human rights groups.

188. Practical protection measures have been worked out by the Committee on the Regulation and Evaluation of Measured Security Risks for the headquarters of trade union organizations (such as closed television circuits, armoured doors, alarms, lighting, fire extinguishers, interphones, etc.), as well as measures to protect trade union leaders personally (including physical protection such as escorts, change of residence, mobilization, communications, transfers, economic humanitarian aid, gun licences and social assistance).

V. HEALTH, SOCIAL SECURITY, CHILDHOOD, FAMILY AND YOUTH (arts. 9, 10 and 12)

189. The basic guidelines of the 1990 reform of the Health and Social Security System were incorporated in the 1991 Constitution, when a universal social security health system was established in conformity with the decentralization policy stipulated in that Constitution. The new system was set out and regulated with the passing of Act No. 100 of 1993 and was introduced in 1994. The decentralized health system in Colombia comprises a universal insurance component managed on a territorial basis. This component enjoys the full coverage of a single scheme of benefits, with two payment options: one contributory, the POS (Compulsory Health Plan)[31] and one subsidized, the PAB (Basic Healthcare Plan)[32]. The POS is a compulsory scheme, based on a monthly contribution which is proportionate to income for all persons in receipt of earnings equal to or greater than two minimum wages and its coverage extends to the families of the insured. The subsidized PAB scheme is intended for poor families (with income less than two minimum wages), whose identification and enrolment is the responsibility of the municipal authorities. A public allowance in this case equal to the value of the technical insurance premium replaces the contribution and is administered by the municipal authorities, which receive tax revenue transfers for that purpose. Under both schemes the beneficiaries choose their own insurance company (the health insurer), which may be either public or private and which undertakes to provide

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[31] POS contributors include dependent workers, civil servants, pensioners and retirees and independent workers with the means to pay.

[32] Contributors to the PAB include persons who are unable to pay and who receive a total or partial allowance from the State to enrol in the health scheme.

coverage of the universal benefits scheme. The health insurers then contract health service providers on behalf of their contributors, which may be either public or private.

190. The territorial management component gives municipalities the responsibility for managing health schemes locally, for guaranteeing public health, for regulating the operation of insurance locally by promoting demand and organizing supply, and lastly for monitoring the quality of services and their impact on the state of health of the population. The departments, on the other hand, are responsible for coordinating municipal actions in the area of public health, for jointly monitoring the quality of health services and for providing technical assistance to municipalities to help them meet their commitments.

191. The reform shifted the emphasis of health insurance financing from a system of supply subsidies to one of demand subsidies and established policies, contents and operating rules for the Basic Healthcare Plan (PAB), which is run directly by the municipal authorities. The PAB includes the following services:

- Health promotion for people at greater risk: the elderly, persons with disabilities or handicaps and persons in the informal sector of the economy;

- Sickness prevention;

- Watch: monitoring of risk factors and identification of individuals not covered by preventive measures.

192. The 1994-1998 National Development Plan established the following objectives in the area of health:

- Reducing the lost years of healthy life by 20%;

- Reducing child mortality by 15%;

- Reducing maternal mortality by 50%;

- Increasing life expectancy at birth by 1 year;

- Increasing coverage of the contributory scheme and increasing the number of beneficiaries covered by the subsidized scheme among the poorest and most vulnerable population.

193. According to the 1997 Quality of Life Survey, the coverage of basic health services in the country had been deficient, especially for the poorest and most vulnerable sector of the population. Among sick people, 21% did not attend health services for lack of money and almost half were not enrolled in any scheme. However, thanks to the reform introduced with Act No. 100 of 1993 (which has been the most important reform in the social sector in the country in recent years), there was a significant increase in the proportion of the population covered (with insurance paid), which rose from 21% in 1993 to 57% in 1997, equivalent to an increase in the number of beneficiaries from 7.9 million to 22.7 million. Of these, 14.6 million are covered by the contributory scheme and 7 million by the subsidized scheme. According to a breakdown by deciles, in the bottom decile more than 60% are not enrolled in any scheme, while in the top decile, 84% enjoy some form of coverage.

194. With a view to removing obstacles to the provision of health services, extending coverage and reducing inequality of access, the 1998-2002 National Development Plan proposes to take the following measures:

- To ensure the viability and financial stability of the system;

- To reduce evasion and avoidance of contributions to the system by establishing mechanisms of identification, access and payment of contributions, and by introducing sanctions;

- To speed up and consolidate the shift of subsidies from supply to demand;

- To encourage people to contribute to the subsidized scheme according to their means;

- To set up the Health Guarantee Fund in order to protect the rights of beneficiaries of the health and social security system;

- To review existing requirements relating to the health insurance companies that administer the subsidized scheme and to the health service providers, so as to ensure that whenever new bodies of this kind are admitted, they will meet the necessary technical, administrative and financial standards that enable them to fulfil their obligations. An evaluation will also be made of existing suppliers.

- To optimize the resources of the sector derived from gambling. The Government will seek the approval of Congress for a draft single law establishing a revenue monopoly. It will also pressure territorial authorities to take whatever steps are necessary to maximise other forms of revenue;

- To specify the powers and responsibilities of the different levels of territorial authority and to make the allocation of resources more efficient. To undertake health prevention and promotion activities;

- To ensure that health insurers and subsidized scheme administrators give priority to the vulnerable population with regard to availability, access and use of specific protection services, early warning and treatment of public health diseases;

- To improve the training of health professionals;

- To improve the information system;

- To supervise and monitor all the actors and levels of the system by restructuring and adapting the National Health Supervisory Authority.

195. According to Ministry of Health figures, 24 960 524 Colombians, representing 60.4% of the total population, were insured under the General Health and Social Security System. Out of that figure, 65.8%, i.e. 16 433 463 beneficiaries (which includes overdue or suspended contributors), including 342 739 beneficiaries of the adapted entities, are enrolled in the contributory scheme, and 8 527 061, or 34.2%, are enrolled in the subsidized scheme. Particularly noteworthy is the coverage achieved in the departments of Santander (75.3%), Antioquia (72.3%) and Santa Fe de Bogotá (81.2%).

196. The extended coverage of the subsidized scheme in 1998 benefited chiefly municipalities with incomes below the national average that house special population groups, such as displaced persons, indigenous communities, elderly persons and women heads of household.

197. With regard to pensions, the coverage of contributors increased significantly, from 3.3 million in 1994 to 4.7 million in 1996. As a result, 29% of the national labour force and 52% of urban workers

are now protected by the pension system. This increased coverage has been achieved particularly thanks to the dynamic development of private pension funds, allowed under Act No. 100, which in December 1996 already catered for over 2 million beneficiaries.

A. Health

1. Maternal and perinatal care

198. The coverage of institutional care for expectant women is now 83.2%[33]; some 30% receive care in the first three months and are generally attended by a doctor. Those who receive no care at all (17% of pregnancies) belong to the most vulnerable groups in terms of social, economic and cultural circumstances.

199. Regional differences appear in the coverage of prenatal care, which is only 62.3% on the Pacific coast, while in Bogotá the coverage is as high as 95%. Vaccination with full doses of tetanus toxoid is performed on 60% of expectant mothers.

200. Institutional delivery facilities are available to 76.8% of women. In the urban area, access is 88.5%, while in rural areas 56% of women were delivered in clinics and 43% at home, possibly by midwives, a situation which must be taken into account in the efforts the country will need to make to reduce maternal morbidity and mortality.

201. Among women with higher education, 99.2% are delivered in clinics, compared with only 40.5% of uneducated women, who mostly give birth at home (58%). Again regional variations are marked in this respect, ranging from 95.4% in Bogotá to 38.0% on the Pacific coast.[34]

202. The reported national average of caesarean deliveries is 16.9%, with notable differences between urban areas (20.7%) and rural areas (10.1%).

203. The most marked regional differences are Cali with 27.0% and the Pacific coast with 5.0%. Women with higher education are more at risk of this type of delivery (42.56%), greatly in excess of the national average and should thus be seen from the point of view of guidance as a risk group in contrast with uneducated women (5.2%), for whom that option does not appear to be available.

204. Clinical care during the puerperal period is only 15%. This situation is expected to improve with Decision No. 117 of the National Health and Social Security Council, since a great number of women are exposed to afterbirth complications due to lack of care and supervision during the puerperium.

205. In order to achieve the target of reducing the maternal mortality rate by 50%, the Ministry of Health made the reduction in maternal mortality one of the priority objectives of the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan (PNSSR)[35] through the following priority actions:

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[33] Profamilia (1995), National Population and Health Survey.

[34] Profamilia (1995). National Population and Health Survey.

[35] Act No. 100 of 1993 clearly establishes the duties, powers and resources of each of the actors and levels involved in the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan. The Plan is based on the principle that the maintenance and improvement of sexual and reproductive health is a commitment to and at the same time an effect of joint action by the Government and the General Health and Social Security System, involving public and private actors, civil society, individuals and their families and the community at large.

- Improving access, guaranteeing institutional coverage and improving the quality of care and personal attention during gestation, delivery and the puerperal and neonatal periods;

- Reducing undesired pregnancies, abortions and unsatisfied demand for contraceptive methods;

- Improving the health and nutritional situation of women, especially adolescents, pregnant women and nursing mothers;

- Improving information systems and epidemiological monitoring in the area of sexual and reproductive health;

- Improving access for women of all ages to social security, especially for those at greatest risk;

- Coordinating actions with all institutions and sectors providing services to this population group.

206. Colombia has achieved the following advances in the pursuit of its objective of reducing maternal mortality by 50%:

1. Increase in prenatal care and institutional delivery coverage, which are around 80%.

2. Developments in 20% of the country of a bio-psycho-social model for reducing maternal and perinatal mortality, which has improved the quality of prenatal care and has helped to reduce maternal and perinatal morbidity and mortality in the part of the country covered so far.

3. Introduction of a system of epidemiological monitoring of maternal and perinatal mortality in 80% of the country.

4. Through the mass media and alternative media, a campaign of information, education and awareness has been waged concerning protective factors and the prevention and control of risk factors in maternal and perinatal health, the prevention of sexually transmitted diseases (HIV/AIDS), the promotion of good treatment, especially for women and children, promotion of the culture of peaceful coexistence and prevention of violence as a basis for mutual respect and negotiated solutions to conflicts.

207. Rules have been issued to regulate sexual and reproductive health contents in the General Health and Social Security system, including the following:

- The PAB (Basic Healthcare Plan) regulates collective State actions for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health and its inclusion on the local political agenda through the Development Plan;

- The POS (Compulsory Health Plan) regulates personal care services for sexual and reproductive health;

- Decision No. 77 of the National Social Security Council gives mandatory priority to linking the system to the poorest sector of the population, displaced persons, women heads of household, adolescents, children under five, rural populations and those on the fringes of society;

- Decision No. 117 defines mandatory activities, procedures and actions, induced demand and comprehensive care for sicknesses of special concern to public health, including those related to sexual and reproductive health.

208. These are some of the programmes intended to implement the Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan.

209. Mother and Infant Care Programme (PAMI). This programme is a component of the Compulsory Subsidized Health Plan (POSS). Its objective is to ensure access for pregnant and nursing women and their children up to one year of age, in the poorest sectors of the population, to prenatal services, delivery and puerperal care, nutritional assistance to mothers and care for infants in the first year of life. In 1995, the PAMI made progress in a number of departments, with the enrolment of the two lowest strata of the population according to the Beneficiary Identification System (SISBEN) in the Subsidized Health and Social Security Scheme. Cover was extended to 82 000 mothers and 64 000 infants under one year of age.

210. In addition, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) offers full protection to young pregnant women under the age of 18 who find themselves in a situation of abandonment or danger, as well as guidance and assistance to pregnant women who are considered to be at social risk.

211. Through the full care units, sufficient care is provided to enable the mother to plan a dignified lifestyle for herself and her child. The women are also trained and cared for in the areas of health, education and opportunities for undertaking income-generating projects.

212. From 1994 to 1999, the care units operating in the country have been strengthened with the support of international bodies, such as the United Nations, thanks to which the service of prevention against early pregnancy has been extended in the communities through programmes in schools and neighbourhood organizations. The full care required by the service is ensured in coordination with the health and education sector and other organizations dealing with education and training.

213. Sexual and reproductive health has been considered a priority area in public health within the country's Development Plan for the current four-year period (1998-2002). This area will be headed by the health sector, with the participation of the education sector and the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF).

214. Through this National Plan, the Ministry of Health aims to reduce existing disparities between regions and groups of population in the country. A further challenge has been the need to increase the insurance coverage of the population under the General Health and Social Security System from the present figure of 52.8% up to 100% by the year 2001.

215. Other policies of the Ministry of Health and other sectors also support the plan in promoting changes aimed at achieving sustainable and just human development targets and improving conditions of health, education, work and welfare for everyone, backed up by general supervision and follow-up, evaluation and monitoring mechanisms.

216. In the planning of activities in favour of sexual and reproductive health, priority has been given to geographical areas affected by populations displaced by violence, as well as to marginal rural and urban areas and to municipalities classified as high risk owing to their elevated rates of maternal and perinatal mortality. Similarly, the Social Security Act No. 100, through its Decision No. 77, ensures that priority is given under the General Health and Social Security System (SGSSS) to insuring the most vulnerable

groups, such as the poorest sectors of the population, women heads of households, pregnant women and nursing mothers, indigenous women, adolescent girls and new-born children.

217. For the further development of the National Sexual and Reproductive Health Plan, the priority strategy adopted has been to strengthen social participation, by establishing active links with community organizations, NGOs, social and productive sectors and the community in general, in actions that promote sexual and reproductive health, supervision and monitoring of the fulfilment of sexual and reproductive health rights and psycho-social support for vulnerable groups. The lines of action of this strategy include:

- Dissemination, validation and appropriation of measures to encourage and protect sexual and reproductive health, through the holding of forums, meetings and workshops at health insurers (EPS), occupational hazard administrators (ARS), service providers (IPS), territorial directorates, health teaching institutions, scientific societies, NGOs and the community at large;

- Strengthening of support groups for the promotion of sexual and reproductive health in its various components;

- Training of community supervisors to strengthen social monitoring of regulations concerning sexual and reproductive health;

- Consultations with local authorities and some social sectors, such as the Ministries of Education and Justice and the Office for Equal Rights for Women, concerning actions required to promote sexual and reproductive health among vulnerable groups.

218. Several non-governmental organizations in the country are affiliated to the Colombian Network of Sexual and Reproductive Rights, whose work is based on the defence of the sexual and reproductive rights of women and includes the following actions amongst others:

- Recognition and protection of the social function of maternity and paternity;

- Protection of the sexual and reproductive rights of women in difficult situations, such as women's prisons, where such rights are frequently violated;

- Consideration of the new concept of full sexual and reproductive health;

- Continuity of information, education and communication activities in the area of sexual and reproductive health;

- Debating the concepts of masculinity and femininity with men and women and strengthening male participation in the promotion of sexual and reproductive health;

- Incorporating sexual and reproductive health actions as part of the Network's work.

2. Nutrition

219. Although Colombia has made significant strides in the field of nutrition, imbalances persist as far as the availability of food, its consumption and the biological benefits thereof are concerned.

220. One of the main policies for dealing with these problems is the National Food and Nutrition Plan (PNAN). The purpose of this plan is "to help improve the food and nutritional situation of the Colombian population, especially the poorest and most vulnerable sections thereof, by combining multisectoral actions in the areas of health, nutrition, food, agriculture, education, communication and the environment"[36].

221. The Plan's specific objectives for the period 1996-2005 are as follows:

- To improve conditions of access to food for the poorest households, by encouraging food autonomy through production;

- To protect and improve the nutritional situation of the poorest and most vulnerable groups through comprehensive programmes including food supplements;

- To ensure quality control of foods in terms of consumption safety and true labelling of contents;

- To reduce deficiencies in micronutrients, such as iron and Vitamin A, and to eliminate iodine deficiencies;

- To improve environmental conditions that help ensure that proper biological benefit is derived from food;

- To promote breastfeeding up to the age of 2: exclusively up to 6 months and with an intake of complementary food up to the age of 2;

- To promote a culture of healthy eating and lifestyles;

- To promote research and evaluation in the areas of nutrition and food in support of the development of the National Food and Nutrition Plan;

- To strengthen the technical and managerial capacity of human resources required to support and ensure the satisfactory development of the Plan.

222. The "glass of milk" programme was launched in October 1996 and benefited 253 000 schoolchildren, who were not receiving any other food supplement. In the programme of nutritional improvement and support, between 60% and 73% of the daily nutritional requirements of children were covered. Some 85 000 peasant children benefited from the rural food aid programme, while 340 000 schoolchildren, who until then had been receiving simple snacks, were moved up to more substantial snacks, achieving twice the target established for the year.

223. As part of the National Food and Nutrition Plan, the strategy of food diversification took the form of a community nutrition project in Caldas, Risaralda and Valle del Cauca. In addition 98 795 community instructors were trained in the handling of food, and 572 tonnes of soy beans were distributed as food supplements in the coffee-growing area.

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[36] Presidential Advisory Council for Social Policy and National Planning Department (1996), Plan for Children (PAFI) "Pact for Children".

224. During the period, 27 156 tonnes of Bienestarina were produced and distributed for a cost of 27 656 million pesos. Food security was ensured with an investment of 357 264 million pesos, covering 1 594 863 children under the age of 7, 2 245 677 children between the ages of 7 and 14, as well as 300 462 pregnant women, nursing mothers and pregnant girls. As part of the promotion of breastfeeding, 26 000 community instructors were trained in the art of parenthood, on the basis of a strategy of affection and good treatment for children. In the second half of 1998, nutritional guidelines were prepared for the Colombian population above the age of 2.

225. The 1998-2002 National Development Plan takes up the objectives of the National Food and Nutrition Plan (PNAN), focusing its action on "boys and girls in State schools with an emphasis on marginal rural and urban sectors with the greatest food deficits, pregnant women and nursing mothers and children under the age of 7 not covered by community homes"[37].

226. The National Development Plan puts forward proposals for specific actions aimed at achieving PNAN objectives that are consistent with the basic principles of the Plan, such as extending the process of decentralization across the country and encouraging citizen participation. Thus it seeks to strengthen community management of the production and sale of food, and to support food security programmes included in departmental and municipal development plans, as well as to fulfil commitments undertaken in the pacts for childhood.

3. Endemic and epidemiological diseases

227. At the World Summit for Children, Colombia took on a commitment to eradicate poliomyelitis and to eliminate neonatal measles and tetanus, diseases considered to be major public health problems. In addition to the progress already made, the country has undertaken to meet other national targets, such as control of hepatitis B and the elimination of congenital rubella. It is currently studying the feasibility of including *Haemophilus influenzae* vaccine for the control of meningitis and pneumonias, as measures of high cost effectiveness. Special consideration is given to the protection of special populations, including indigenous communities, persons displaced by violence and street dwellers.

228. The changing behaviour of immunization-preventable diseases dealt with under the Extended Immunizations Programme (PAI) and the new health policies, especially those directed at protecting children and young people, require constant changes in epidemiological management and monitoring. The programme's actions have focussed on the following plans:

a) *Neonatal Tetanus Eradication Plan*: The country has met its undertaking to eradicate neonatal tetanus as a public health problem. The impact of the plan is reflected in an 87% fall in the number of cases between 1989 and 1996. Colombia is now on a rate of less than 0.1 per thousand live births. The plan's actions have been concentrated in 328 municipalities that are considered high risk, maintaining the vaccination of all pregnant women in the country with diphtheria toxoid. This plan is in line with the sexual and reproductive health policy of the Ministry of Health;

b) *Measles Eradication Plan*: year 2000 target. This plan was launched in May 1993, its first major strategy being the massive and indiscriminate vaccination of the population aged between 9 months and 14 years, achieving a coverage of 97% (11 098 624). Subsequent strategies have been directed at maintaining anti-measles coverage of not less than 95% in infants less than 1 year old and the structuring of an effective epidemiological monitoring system for eruptive febrile diseases. As support for the Measles Eradication Plan, in September 1995 the vaccination campaign recommended for Colombia

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[37] National Planning Department. 1998-2002 National Development Plan, "Change for building peace".

included the triple virus vaccine (measles, rubella and parotiditis), which was used in the follow-up campaign for persons exposed to measles between 1993 and 1995, achieving 90% coverage in the population between 1 and 3 years of age. After 1995, the anti-measles vaccine was replaced by the triple virus, and the age of infants vaccinated was increased from 9 months to 1 year (12-23 months). In addition, a scheme was introduced for refresher vaccinations of triple virus at 10 years of age;

c) *Rubella and Congenital Rubella Control Plan*: A plan to eradicate congenital rubella was initiated in 1996, with the vaccination of 2.6 million children between the ages of 10 and 12;

d) *Plan to Consolidate the Eradication of Poliomyelitis*: This plan is supported through intensive anti-polio coverage in the Regular Programme, and the indiscriminate vaccination of children under 5, on the occasion of all national, departmental and local days organized in the country, combined with a system of intensified epidemiological monitoring;

e) *Hepatitis B Control Plan*;

f) *Plan for the Control of other Immunization-Preventable Diseases*: whooping cough, diphtheria, tuberculosis and parotiditis and meningitis with *Haemophilus influenzae*.

229. According to the survey by the Extended Immunizations Programme, in 1998 coverage in the departments of Amazonas, Arauca, Chocó, Guainia, Guajira, Norte de Santander, Putumayo, Risaralda, San Andrés, Santander, Vaupés, Vichada and the district of Cartagena is in a critical state; departments with coverage at risk were Boyacá, Caldas, Cauca, Cesar, Córdoba, Cundinamarca, Meta, Nariño, Quindío, Sucre, Valle and the district of Santa Marta, giving a total of 25 territorial units with coverage of under 80%, in other words 69% of the total. This poor situation is due to shortcomings in the assumption of responsibilities by administrators and insurers in the Regular Vaccinations Programme, and to insufficient monitoring of vaccination coverage by territorial health directorates, as well as to the unrest affecting the country in general.

4. Improvement of occupational health

230. In 1994, the Government set up the General Occupational Hazards System, headed by the Ministry of Labour, with the technical backing of the Ministry of Health, specifically to afford protection to workers against accidents at work and occupational illness.

231. Resources were allocated for this insurance system aimed at promoting workers' health and preventing risks. The introduction of the system led to significant development in the field of hazard control legislation, such as "The application of occupational health programmes in corporations" and workers' participation schemes such as the "Joint Occupational Health Committees".

232. In 1996, the Network of National, Sectional and Local Occupational Health Committees was set up, for a decentralized approach to promotion, prevention, human resource training, the identification of high-risk populations and appropriate actions to counter those risks.

233. In particular, the Ministry of Health, together with the Pan-American Health Organization, the Colombian Petroleum Company (Ecopetrol) and the Workers' Trade Union (USO), developed a project on Occupational Health in the Oil Industry (SOIP) as a model for producer countries.

234. In 1998, coordination was achieved between governmental and non-governmental agencies for the formulation of policy and the establishment of objectives to improve productivity and competitiveness in enterprises by diminishing accidents at work and promoting workers' health. The 1999-2002 National

Occupational Health Plan and the Handbook on Procedures were prepared in order to help medical staff of health service providers to identify work accidents and occupational illnesses. In addition, a base was established for developing the National Occupational Cancer Prevention System.

235. As part of the policies of the Basic Healthcare Plan and in order to provide support for territorial authorities in meeting their occupational health responsibilities, technical assistance was provided in terms of legislation, technical standards, licensing of occupational health services, medical radiology, bio-security, the occupational health programme of health service providers, promotion of workers' health and prevention of occupational hazards. An evaluation was also made of the state of development and operation of sectional and local occupational health committees, in coordination with regional labour authorities, and the project on Occupational Health in the Oil Industry was finalized, with coverage of 730 workers exposed to aromatic solvents at the industrial complex of Barrancabermeja.

236. In September 1999, a set of rules was issued to organize the health sector technically and operationally to be able to identify, register and report cases of occupational illnesses and work accidents in the country, so as to be able to assess the real dimension of accident rates in relation to working conditions, taking account of economic activities, workstations and occupations, the aim being to identify the actions and investment needed to prevent risks and to apply technical standards of health and security at work.

237. The same set of rules puts the territorial health authorities in a better position to assist the Ministry of Labour, through labour inspectorates, in the development of programmes, monitoring and sanctions, as well as employers, insurers and occupational health service providers.

238. The Ministry of Health has also issued a number of standards governing the skills required in the area of occupational health services. In 1996, requirements and procedures were established for issuing licences in various technical fields, with a view to promoting investigative, instructive and cultural development in the prevention of risks.

239. There are at present 64 academic programmes and 1550 professionals holding licences in different areas of occupational health.

240. As far as new legislation in the area of occupational health is concerned, the following regulations have been issued in the last five years:

- Decree No. 1281 of 22 June 1994, regulating high risk activities;
- Decree No. 1294 of 22 June 1994, issuing rules for authorizing non-profit making companies that assume risks derived from occupational illness and work accidents;
- Decree No. 1295 of 22 June 1994, determining the organization and administration of the General Occupational Hazards System;
- Decree No. 1346 of 22 June 1994, regulating the integration, financing and operation of Disability Qualification Boards;
- Decree No. 1771 of 3 August 1994, partially regulating Decree No. 1295 of 1994;
- Decree No. 1772 of 3 August 1994, regulating enrolment in and contributions to the General Occupational Hazards System;

- Decree No. 1832 of 3 August 1994, adopting the table of occupational illnesses;

- Decree No. 1833 of 3 August 1994, determining the administration and operation of the Occupational Hazards Fund;

- Decree No. 1834 of 3 August 1994, regulating the establishment and operation of the National Occupational Hazards Council;

- Decree No. 1835 of 3 August 1994, regulating the high risk activities of civil servants;

- Decree No. 2644 of 29 November 1994, issuing the single table for compensation for loss of working capacity between 5% and 49.99% and corresponding financial benefit;

- Decree No. 2925 of 31 December 1994, updating the quantities of sound technical assets guaranteed by life insurers to operate in the areas of providential insurance, pensions and occupational hazards of the social security system;

- Decree No. 303 of 10 February 1995, determining the validity of Disability Qualification Boards;

- Decree No. 676 of 26 April 1995, partially regulating Decree No. 1295 of 1994 and clarifying and amending some articles of Decree No. 1833 of 1994;

- Decree No. 1557 of 15 September 1995, regulating the integration and operation of the Special Disability Qualification Board;

- Decree No. 1859 of 26 October 1995, partially regulating investments of the Occupational Hazards Fund;

- Decree No. 2100 of 29 November 1995, adopting the classification table of economic activities for the General Occupational Hazards System and further provisions;

- Decree No. 2150 of 5 December 1995, abrogating or amending unnecessary regulations and procedures in the public administration;

- Decree No. 2345 of 29 December 1995, issuing rules governing special technical reserves for providential disability and survival insurance services;

- Decree No. 2347 of 29 December 1995, issuing rules for constituting special technical reserves in the area of occupational hazards;

- Decree No. 0190 of 25 January 1996, issuing rules regulating the relations between teaching and welfare in the General Health and Social Security System;

- Resolution No. 001319 of 14 May 1996, cancelling a number of appointments of members and secretaries of National and Regional Disability Qualification Boards;

- Resolution No. 0681 of 18 June 1996, adopting a single application form for reimbursement under EPS and ARP schemes in the area of occupational hazards;

- Decree No. 1530 of 26 August 1996, partially regulating Act No. 100 of 1993 and Decree No. 1295 of 1994.

241. In June 1998, 5.7 million employed workers were covered by the occupational hazards administration.

B. Children

242. According to the most recent population census in 1993, 42.7% of the Colombian population is under 18 years of age; 41% of these young people and children live in poverty and 15.3% in extreme poverty.

243. The administration's 1990-1994 Development Plan emphasized the need to design and implement a long-term strategy giving social policy a central place for achieving development and promoting economic growth in the country. In this respect the Government has undertaken to increase budget appropriations and social expenditure, to reform institutions related to the social sector and to improve the management, implementation, efficiency and impact of policies through the decentralization of resources and responsibilities for the allocation of expenditure at local level, the transfer of subsidies to lower income strata and greater competition in the provision of basic social services.

244. The Plan in Favour of Children (PAFI), which has been part of the Government's social policy agenda for this period, is a response to the commitments undertaken at the World Summit for Children held in 1990.

245. On the basis of its diagnosis of prevailing conditions with respect to the health, nutrition, education, sanitation and protection of Colombian children, the Government set itself the following targets for the period 1990-2000.

1) To reduce the infant mortality rate to one third (children under 5).

2) To reduce the maternal mortality rate by 50%.

3) To reduce the rate of serious and moderate malnutrition in children under 5 by 50%.

4) Universal access to drinking water and sanitary facilities for the elimination of excreta.

5) Universal access to basic education. To ensure that at least 80% of children finish primary school.

6) To reduce the rate of adult illiteracy to half that recorded in 1990 (with an emphasis on women).

7) Improved protection for children living in especially difficult circumstances.

246. During the period 1994-1998, policies and programmes to help children were implemented under a strategy called "Pact for Children". This pact set out an undertaking to improve the living conditions of children under 18 years of age through joint, coordinated action between the State, the private sector and civil society. As a management strategy, the pact designed and implemented social policy in favour of children through actions focussed principally on greater awareness of the situation and needs of this group of the population, the institutional offers available and the identification of achievable objectives and targets.

247. The Pact for Children reactivated, updated and strengthened the Plan in Favour of Children (PAFI) with a view to identifying and defining the situation of children in the country using a number of indicators[38], and to setting up a database as a tool for designing relevant policies and programmes and for focussing resources more efficiently and more effectively. Apart from using the Pact as a diagnosis and monitoring tool, it was necessary to extend this methodology throughout the national territory and to provide enough advice and backup to keep the process moving forward. Under the coordination of the Presidential Advisory Council on Social Policy, support teams were set up in the regions with the participation of officials in all the sectors involved in fulfilling the commitments undertaken with the Pact. The Advisory Council provided technical training both for gathering information and for implementing the programmes and projects included in the Pact for Children.

248. The Pact for Children and the PAFI indicators became basic strategies for developing a children's policy while at the same time helping to consolidate the process of decentralization in Colombia, creating intra-sectoral and intersectoral areas of action at both territorial and national levels, and introducing monitoring facilities to allow for the necessary adjustments and to identify priorities for the preparation of national, sectoral and territorial plans

a) Educational care for children and full prevention. This heading covers the programmes of initial education, educational care for children at high risk and full prevention of ill treatment of children. Initial education refers to comprehensive educational processes directed at families, communities and educational institutions for the purpose of improving the socialization areas and practices of children under the age of 6. This scheme was introduced in all the country's departments and districts under the coordination of education secretariats and the management of intersectoral committees. The programme also added further support to research on very young children's education. Altogether 20 study projects (one per department) were undertaken on the state of research on children's education over the last decade (1985-1995) and 20 case studies (one per region) on child-rearing practices in Colombia;

b) Programme of educational care for boys and girls in high-risk situations. The aim of the programme was to ensure that these children were brought into the public educational service through teaching strategies adapted to their need for full development while undergoing social rehabilitation. The children concerned were divided into two groups of children and youngsters in an irregular situation (article 30 of the Children's Code). The measures taken to assist street children and children in the street were as follows: project for the analysis and improvement of the living conditions of street children with special emphasis on those consuming psychoactive substances; training and awareness workshops for departmental and municipal authorities in towns taking part in the implementation of the project; organization of the project on a national and local (introductory) level; review of the educational situation of street children. For child offenders, the following measures were programmed: preparation of an education plan for full care of these minors, in coordination with the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF); holding of two round tables with the Inter-Institutional Committee on the institutional diagnosis and the systematic introduction of methodological advances achieved in reeducation centres.

249. The ICBF is responsible for guiding and developing the Government's social policy in favour of the family and, through the National Family Welfare System, for coordinating public and private

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[38] Infantile and maternal mortality and morbidity, nutritional condition, schooling, drinking water coverage and quality, adolescent pregnancies, abandoned children, children in physical danger, physical or sexual exploitation, working children, street children or children in the street, minors consuming psychoactive substances, minor offenders in breach of the criminal law.

organizations undertaking actions in the country to improve the welfare of children and families, especially in the poorest sectors of the population.

250. The problems of violence in the family, which generate discharges of physical and psychological aggressiveness against children, combined with the educational patterns the children experienced in their early years and the political and social violence that led to the forced displacement of families, are just some of the reasons why children take to the streets and make them their permanent habitat.

251. The ICBF, established for the protection of children and the family, has been dealing with 4 008 613 children under 18; it allocates 88% of its resources to direct care of the children, in addition to 70% of its human resources.

252. The ICBF has brought about changes in the paradigms determined by a system of State-funded assistance, using clearly defined strategies such as social participation, solid links with the family as the affective and psychological support of children and community participation in the development of practical measures, in order to promote social action and human development and to help children participate in the social environment and the public and social policy reforms undertaken for their benefit.

1. Community Welfare Homes

253. This programme has been designed as a set of educational and training measures aimed at strengthening the State, the family, the community and civil society, the intention being to favour the full development of families and children under the age of 7 living in conditions of extreme poverty. The corresponding strategies seek to improve their living conditions and quality of life and to enhance the sense of responsibility and belonging of families, social sectors and institutions involved in the project.

254. The operation and development of the programme are taken care of by the actual families of the beneficiary children, who set themselves up in parents' associations or other types of bodies, which, once their legal personality has been established with the ICBF, can pass support agreements with the latter to administer the resources allocated by the national Government plus the group's own contributions.

255. According to the guidelines and the technical and administrative procedures laid down for the organization and operation of the programme, the Community Welfare Homes function on the basis of a system of allowances, which are the resources allocated for the benefit of the boys and girls enrolled in the project. The allowances are used to finance the initial benefit, the benefit itself (monthly allowance for community mothers), durable and non-durable educational material, rations for children and community mothers, and support for sanitation, fuel and/or public services. The programme also runs a budget for the training of community education agents (community mothers), contractors and heads of household, as well as for the guidance, monitoring and evaluation of the project.

256. Community mothers are key players in the Community Welfare Homes project. Their role in the programme is to act as community education agents on the basis of solidarity. It constitutes a voluntary contribution to the development of their community and protection for the children. Their role does not imply any working relationship with the contractors, nor with the ICBF as coordinator of the project.

257. The project currently includes 81 627 homes catering for 1 399 350 users, with a budget amounting to 349 964 million pesos, representing 42.5% of the total investment budget.

258. With regard to the training of community mothers, the ICBF has since the launch of the programme adopted training and preparation as its basic strategy to qualify individuals, seeking to promote the participation of new leaders and the joint management of new education and community projects.

259. The training given to community mothers is ongoing, with the intention of making the ICBF's Community Education Project fully operational. The training strategies include personal attendance workshops, working study groups, associations, meetings and seminars, amongst others. The training phases are divided into: introduction, when a mother enters the programme; assisted management of her daily activities; and academic training aimed at bringing them up to a formal education standard. Training is conducted with the backing of local authorities and private organizations that support the programme's objectives and goals.

260. One of the positive effects of the ongoing training given to community mothers is that it helps them progress in terms of organization, participation and leadership. Nevertheless, the ICBF recognizes the need to redefine approaches and methodologies in order to make their training more meaningful and to facilitate the full development of the children involved.

261. Community mothers also receive other benefits (earned by their ICBF-backed management activities) such as: loans for housing improvements, viability assistance to set themselves up as community organizations and to participate directly in the administration of the programme; and entitlement to the same assistance and financial benefits as those enjoyed by beneficiaries of the contributory scheme under Act No. 100/93, as well as to social security benefits and a pension subsidy under Act No. 509 of 1999.

262. In its 13 years of operation, the programme has evolved and has created new forms of care. The present Government, in its National Development Plan (Act No. 508/99), proposes the creation of new community homes with the participation, amongst others, of the ICBF, family compensation funds, municipal governments and families, in line with the policy adopted for the National Family Welfare System. One achievement of this approach has been closer coordination with funds and local authorities for the expansion and improvement of the programme.

263. For the year 2000, the ICBF's priority is to establish protection and prevention programmes with the support of governmental and non-governmental organizations, following the principles of commitment, participation and respect for cultural and regional differences in both urban and rural areas to guarantee the fundamental rights of all children.

264. The 1998-2002 National Development Plan proposes to extend the Pact in Favour of Children and the fulfilment of its targets "in coordination with the bodies responsible at national level, with departmental intersectoral groups and with territorial planning departments, to manage the incorporation, implementation and monitoring of family and childhood policies as part of the development plans of territorial authorities".

a) New models of care for poor children under 6 years of age. This programme will be supported by the ICBF, the family compensation funds, municipal governments and families, amongst others. It will be financed by the funds and by the territorial authorities. The full care programme includes general care, pre-school education, psychosocial and motor development, leisure activities for children and enrolment of Sisben strata 1 and 2 children in the Health and Social Security System.

b) Municipal childcare initiatives. This programme aims to improve the care and protection provided to children by jointly financing initiatives originated independently by the community, local government, corporations and organizations operating in the neighbourhood;

c) National Family Violence Prevention and Care Plan (HAZ PAZ). This plan starts from the family as the focus for action, the basic web of relations, the essential area for cohabitation, the building block of the social fabric and the prime place for generating peace processes. It aims to reduce family violence indices, to strengthen factors that protect families and to facilitate the latter's access to violence prevention and care projects and services. The plan considers three lines of action: prevention, early detection and care. These actions will be implemented through training and preparation programmes, the strengthening of networks, access to information and guidance, in addition to comprehensive care, research, assessment and monitoring. In practice, the plan will follow the basic principles of the National Development Plan "Change for Building Peace", namely restoring the social fabric, promoting the participation of civil society and extending the process of decentralization in order to enable the regions to take over the programmes and achieve the set objectives.

265. In accordance with the guidelines of the National Development Plan in the period 1998-1999, the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF) carried out prevention and protection actions on behalf of 5 653 732 beneficiaries, including children under 7 years of age, children under 18, pregnant women, nursing mothers, pregnant girls and families in general.

2. Prevention in the family

266. From 1999, under the National Family Violence Prevention Plan, prevention, early detection and care projects have been coordinated with the Advisory Council on Social Policy, through 8 working strategies with strata 1 and 2 families or families at high economic, social and cultural risk. The sum of 6 767 million pesos was allocated to the implementation of three lines of action, for the preparation and dissemination of training material, intended for the 737 institutional educators, 90 000 community agents and 181 162 families enrolled in the plan.

267. With an investment of 6 000 million pesos, the basis has been laid for the launch of individual and group activity projects, for children between the ages of 7 and 18 taken from strata 1 and 2. These projects are jointly managed with the local authorities under the Juvenile Clubs project, covering 44 475 children in 2 965 clubs up and down the country. Community and institutional instructors were also trained in drug prevention.

3. Protection

268. Until now there has been no census giving information concerning the number of children in need of protection. However, the ICBF, under its various programmes of assistance to abandoned children and children at risk, attended to 431 817 children between 1994 and 1999. Its programme of assistance to child offenders and children participating in an offence dealt with 104 800 children and its programme of protection and rehabilitation of children under 18 years of age with 536 136 more children, for a grand total of 1 072 753 children looked after during the same period.

269. The ICBF is keen to afford protection to children under 18 who really need it. It is therefore extending the assistance and guidance it provides to families with a view to avoiding the sort of situations of social and family risk that give rise to the need to apply for protection from the State, while at the same time identifying factors that are conducive to risk and ill-treatment.

270. The ICBF has undertaken a series of activities to care for children who have been abandoned or who have lost their families, with a view to guaranteeing their right to grow up and develop in a family environment, among other fundamental rights. The actions are aimed at finding appropriate remedies, but when the family is unable to help or is not known, efforts are made to find possibilities of adoption for the children or forms of care to replace the biological parents, such as a substitute home, a care centre or a foster family.

271. The ICBF's current policies are aimed at recognizing, reestablishing and restoring the rights of children, in order to encourage a general movement in favour of childhood by encouraging attitudes and behaviours of respect, equality and gender equality, appreciation and protection on the part of the family, the community and institutions.

272. In the period 1998-1999, a programme was carried out to protect children under 18 and their families, benefiting 270 908 children who were either abandoned or at risk, 27 768 child offenders and 474 554 children needing social and legal care, for an investment of 118 645 million pesos. In order to consolidate protection, a process of conceptual preparation was undertaken based on the principle of full protection and taking into consideration the implications in terms of the provision of services, with the drafting of preliminary documents and administrative technical standards. An emergency plan was also launched which led to a 71% improvement in the monitoring and updating of protection records in 33 regional branches and agencies. Thanks to new care facilities and the establishment of local committees, it was possible to avoid placing children in institutions, so that 32% of them benefited from a family environment.

273. Pursuing the process of self-assessment and improvement, joint efforts are being conducted with 200 protection, rehabilitation and reeducation institutions, with a view to defining criteria for the supervision, monitoring and quality of services. In addition, in coordination with the Ombudsman's Office, the High Commissioner for Peace, the Office of the Attorney General, the National Police, the army and the Ministry of the Interior, a national programme was launched to provide care for children detached from the armed conflict.

274. As part of coordinated efforts, the ICBF took part in preparing the Lines of Action and Strategies Plan. In 1999, 4 555 children were cared for in rehabilitation institutions, 2 296 in family environments through special substitute homes, for a total investment of 23 915 million pesos. Six booklets were printed on Care for Boys and Girls with Disabilities, of which 18 000 copies were circulated.

275. On the research front, progress has been made with the study to identify risk factors causing the increasing occurrence of disabilities in the municipality of Tebaida.

276. Progress achieved in the development of protection programmes has taken the form of an improvement in services, the reactivation of the concept of full protection in the light of the fundamental rights of children, as well as the speeding up of legal and administrative procedures surrounding the provision of services.

277. Reported drawbacks generally centre on the difficulty of extending the coverage of services owing to expenditure restrictions, which is a negative factor when it comes to undertaking new projects. Beyond the area of coordinated action between institutions, the other bodies that share the responsibility for resolving social problems tend to delegate that responsibility to the ICBF, which has to take on populations outside its own scope.

4. Family law in Colombia

278. With regard to family law, from the point of view of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), it is worth noting that, in conformity with the terms of articles 42, 44 and 93 of the Constitution, the Institute is the central authority for the application of the Hague Conventions on the return of children and adoption, which were incorporated into domestic legislation with the passing of Acts No. 173 of 1994 and No. 265 of 1996.

279. In the area of family legislation, the following laws directly related to family, women's and children's affairs have been passed:

Act No. 25 of 17 December 1992 developing subparagraphs 9, 10, 11, 12 and 13 of article 42 of the Constitution;

Act No. 82 of 3 November 1993 issuing rules governing special support for women heads of household;

Act No. 173 of 1994 approving the Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction, signed in the Hague on 25 October 1980;

Act No. 248 of 29 December 1995 approving the Inter-American Convention to Prevent, Punish and Eradicate Violence against Women, signed in Belém do Pará, Brazil, on 9 June 1994;

Act No. 258 of 17 January 1996 establishing the family housing appropriation and other provisions;

Act No. 294 of 16 July 1996 developing article 42 of the Constitution and issuing rules for preventing, remedying and sanctioning family violence;

Act No. 311 of 12 August 1996 creating the national family protection register and other provisions;

Act No. 360 of 7 February 1997 amending certain rules of Volume II, section XI, of Decree Law No. 100 of 1980 (Penal Code) concerning offences against sexual liberty and decency, and adding article 417 of Decree No. 2700 of 1991 (CPP) and other provisions;

Act No. 418 of 26 December 1997 establishing certain instruments for the search for peaceful coexistence and the effectiveness of justice and other provisions;

Act No. 361 of 7 February 1999 establishing mechanisms for the social integration of persons under limitation and other provisions.

280. In 1996 the technical legal division of the Legal Subdirectorate published a booklet comparing changes and similarities between Act No. 7 of 1979, issuing rules for the protection of children, establishing the National Family Welfare System, reorganizing the ICBF and other provisions, and Decree No. 2388 of 1979, regulating Acts Nos. 75 of 1968, 27 of 1974 and 7 of 1979. It also completed its project for the compilation of changes and similarities between Decree No. 334 of 1998 on the ICBF statutes and Act No. 75 of 1968 issuing rules on filiation, creating the ICBF and other provisions, a work which has not yet been published.

281. For the purpose of providing support material for civil servants, judicial authorities and students of this branch of family law, the Family Law Bulletin (Carta de Derecho de Familia) is being published on a regular basis.

5. Child labour

282. A significant feature of child labour is that it occurs mainly in the informal sector, where the children are usually paid very little or not at all, are not enrolled in the social security system and work for very long hours. Although at the beginning they manage to attend school at the same time, the longer hours, financial difficulties in the home and the shortage of places in schools exert pressure on them to drop out. Furthermore studies indicate that between 20 and 25% of children do work that represents a risk for their physical and emotional health.

283. On the basis of the country's Constitution, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Children's Code and the Substantive Labour Code, Colombian legislation establishes the right of children to be free of exploitation and guarantees their right at least to basic education.

284. In 1995, the Inter-Institutional Committee for the Gradual Eradication of Child Labour and the Protection of Child Workers set out the National Plan of Action for the eradication of child labour and the protection of child workers, with the following programme objectives:

- To strengthen the educational system to ensure that it retains children at least until they complete their basic education and to develop training programmes preparing children over 14 years of age for work;

- To guarantee the right to health for all children within their family environment as well as access to full social security (health, pensions and occupational hazards) for workers over 14 years of age;

- To support the poorest families in their productive work and affectionate child-rearing activities;

- To actively seek out children engaged in harmful and dangerous forms of work and to afford them full protection;

- To strengthen national legislation and mechanisms guaranteeing its enforcement;

- To be fully aware at all times of the problems of child labour at national and at local level;

- To establish or to strengthen bodies responsible for developing the policy of eradicating child labour.

285. Where exploited child workers are concerned, further efforts have been made to set up a system of active search for child workers and to prepare a proposal for a joint effort to eradicate child labour in coordination with the ILO's International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) programme.

286. Among the actions undertaken to eradicate child labour and to protect working children, four regional committees were set up and an active search system was introduced to identify children at high risk; an information system was activated; a project was launched to create awareness among workers

and employers, while the participation of the private and public sectors in the programme was strengthened.

287. In 1997 and 1998, the International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour (IPEC) financed the development of the following projects[39]:

- Development of the programme of active search and full care for working children and young people;

- Development of a productive educational model based on environmental education, as a way of discouraging child labour in the municipality of Cerrito, Santander;

- Preparation of a personal development module for girls in prostitution;

- Education and social awareness regarding the problem of working children;

- Municipal awareness and handling of the problem of child labour in 14 municipalities of the departments of Boyacá, Cundinamarca and Tolima.

288. In 1999, the following projects were in the process of being approved by IPEC:

- Eradication of child labour at the Bogotá central market;

- Eradication of child labour in street trading and public markets in the towns of Cúcuta and Bucaramanga;

- Eradication of the sexual exploitation of children in the towns of Cartagena and Barranquilla.

289. The International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour, the Ministry of Labour and Social Security and other ministries, as well as other governmental institutions and representatives of employers and workers, face the task of redesigning the policy for the eradication of child labour over the next four years. This implies the need to improve information systems dealing with child labour in Colombia, extending decentralization, which is the central objective of the 1998-2002 National Development Plan so as to ensure implementation of the programme on a local level, strengthening the capacity of institutions to implement the programme, adjusting existing national legislation and ratifying international conventions, strengthening inspection and supervisory mechanisms, and lastly committing key sectors of society, and more particularly the educational sector, to the eradication of child labour.

6. Recent advances in childcare

290. Recognizing the need to adapt its institutions, plans and programmes to new social requirements, President Pastrana's administration undertook to restructure the ICBF, in an effort to modernize it alongside the modernization of the State itself. Thus Decrees Nos. 1137 and 1138 of 22 June 1999 set up the Administrative Family Welfare System, with the responsibility of coordinating the National Family Welfare System.

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[39] International Labour Organization (ILO) International Programme on the Elimination of Child Labour - IPEC (1999). "Child labour in Colombia, development and perspectives", working document, Bogotá.

291. The 1998-2002 National Development Plan has incorporated specific targets and strategies aimed at the full protection of children, with an emphasis on actions to eradicate child labour and to protect working children. Among positive actions in this respect, it is worth noting the participation of working children in the development of action programmes, in addition to ratification of ILO Convention No. 138 fixing the Minimum Age for Admission of Children to Industrial Employment.

292. The programmes described above are mostly headed by the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF), which in the previous four year period dealt with 6.8 million beneficiaries, a figure representing 76.2% of all children under 7 years old and 83.7% of children between the ages of 7 and 18 requiring assistance. It is worth noting that the coverage of protection programmes has been substantially extended as a result of better methods of identifying those in need.

293. The national education budget rose by 178% in the period 1994-1998, from 2.01 billion pesos in 1994 to 5.6 billion pesos in 1998, accounting on average for a proportion of 20.2% of the total general budget of the country. In this respect, it may be said that Colombia has begun to invest a percentage of its GDP in education which is equal to or even greater than that of countries with a similar economic structure. It may be noted that in 1997 the proportion of ordinary public expenditure invested in education was 28.1%, 23.6% in 1998 and 31.3% in 1999, figures equivalent on average to 1.1 and 1.2% of GDP.

294. During the period of the report, educational opportunities were offered to more than 1.7 million children. Out of this total, approximately 1.12 million are due to government action, while a little over 580 000 are the result of the effort made by private education, partly financed from State subsidies. It is worth noting that the 1999-2000 Educational Development Plan for Building Peace focussed its actions on: mobilizing the resources of individuals and enterprises that undertook to finance a school basket, regulating the social service in rural areas for students of education or going in for teaching, and extending access to people dispersed throughout rural areas and to the adult population. An effort was also made to find alternative models for areas with no proper teacher-pupil ratios, and to introduce new-school programmes and the tutorial learning system, amongst others.

295. As shown in the report, educational coverage was increased as follows: for the country as a whole between 1993 and 1997, the grade promotion rate in primary education rose from 81.8% to 83.5%, and in secondary education from 78.5% to 84.2%.

296. In terms of investment, according to Social Mission estimates based on DANE national accounts and the budgetary spending of the Account's Office, for children's education in 1999 public administration bodies (national and regional) invested 4.05 billion pesos, equivalent to 2.74% of GDP, and for social assistance 889 458 million, corresponding to 0.60% of GDP.

297. Among the family and childhood policies of the 1998-2002 National Development Plan, the following advances are worth noting for the period January to June 1999:

a) National Food and Nutrition Plan. In this area, progress has been made with the implementation of the soybean project; assistance for 4 173 698 beneficiaries of full care projects, including a food component; and secured production and distribution of Bienestarina (27 000 metric tonnes) for beneficiaries of the plan. Additions were made of fluorine and iodine in salt for human consumption: the standard was fulfilled to the extent of 72% and 86.4% in each case. Food supplements were added to the daily rations of beneficiaries in receipt of food assistance. Support was also provided for pregnant women, nursing mothers and pregnant girls through the family units of community welfare homes, in terms of education concerning breastfeeding, the supply of food supplements and coordination with hospitals friends of mothers and children;

b) Full childcare programmes. The main feature here has been the policy of giving more attention to community mothers to improve their conditions, as well as the construction and administration of 15 multiple homes in the coffee-growing area, through the Colsanitas agreement and a soft loan by the Spanish Government;

c) Special protection for children under 18 years of age. This population has benefited from the consolidation of the protection information system in a number of ways. Active protection cases have been updated, while cases inactive for more than a year have been reduced by 71%; preliminary technical administrative documents and guidelines have been issued on full protection and protection services; assistance to children in a family environment has increased by 32% in the last 2 years; new software has been implemented for the assessment and monitoring of institutions; in addition, a systematic programme has been implemented for the evaluation of processes and the results of services;

d) National Family Welfare System: the most noteworthy feature in this respect has been a reconsideration of the conceptual framework with a view to its modernization;

e) Participation of the Family Compensation Funds in the support programme for ICBF welfare homes. In this respect, a programme has been launched for the improvement of community homes; a number of improvements have been set in motion, such as delegated administration, monitoring of administrative, educational and nutritional management, and training provided through associations of parents and community mothers to improve the quality of care, especially in educational and recreational aspects, for the benefit of the children looked after in welfare homes;

f) As regards health, it may be noted that in 1999 alone, under the Government of President Pastrana, a total of 3 142 billion pesos were invested. Thanks to the legislation pushed through by this Government, more than 80 000 community mothers, looking after almost one and a half million children from very low-income families, were given social security cover;

g) It is also worth noting that under the Basic Healthcare Plan for the year 2000, a number of screening actions are planned (detection of children at risk of visual health deterioration for the purpose of referring them to the appropriate services) on a municipal level;

h) With a view to seeking effective means of stopping the increase in drug consumption and to developing strategies for creating sound and productive alternatives for all those who directly or indirectly are affected by this problem, the Government has launched the RUMBOS Programme, which is answerable directly to the Office of the President of the Republic;

i) Faced with an obvious lack of information regarding these problems, RUMBOS and the National Drug Investigation Commission (CNID)[40] undertook the task of conducting a survey on drug consumption among young people between the ages of 10 and 24. This survey was duly completed in October 1999, with the assistance of national and regional governmental and non-governmental bodies, as well as the help of professionals and young people engaged in full prevention work with the territorial authorities;

j) This survey is the outcome of a first joint effort by RUMBOS and the CNID to seek new strategies for assessing the consumption of narcotic substances among young Colombians. The results of

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[40] The CNID is made up of representatives of the following institutions: RUMBOS Presidential Programme, Health Department of Bogota, Full Prevention District Coordinating Unit, Research Centre of the Faculty of Medicine of the Military University, National Narcotics Directorate, Ministry of Education and Ministry of Health.

this new assessment show that consumption levels in Colombia are substantially higher than those found in previous studies carried out in Colombia. It is not sure, on the other hand, that the consumption of narcotic substances has increased to quite the same extent, because the methodology used in previous studies differs considerably from that used in the latest survey, so that the data are not really comparable;

k) The levels of consumption identified in the survey are nevertheless a warning call to make us aware that Colombia unfortunately is beginning to reach significant levels of consumption in some of the substances. The recent survey shows that alcohol and marijuana continue to be the drugs most consumed by the population. While youngsters between the ages of 15 and 19 consume more than children aged from 10 to 14 years, there is a need for society to pay special attention to the country's youth in general. The Government for its part has launched a broad prevention campaign through the media, basically targeting the younger members of the population owing to their greater vulnerability.

C. Youth

298. In the search for equal rights, the education sector has set out priorities which, in several spheres and under the responsibility of different State bodies, have taken the form of supplementary educational programmes directly involving more than one-third of the country's population, considered vulnerable or at high risk. The following were some of the actions carried out in this area.

299. Formulation of policies for youth. Act No. 375 of 1997 was passed after consultations not only between the Government and Congress but also among 6 000 youth movements and groups, who played a large part in drafting the final text. In order to strengthen local management in youth affairs, all the mayors in the country were given instructions to incorporate a local youth policy in development plans as part of the process of institutionalization, institutional coordination and management. Altogether 20 municipal youth councils were set up and, within the framework of the agreed objectives and in order to meet the requirements of this population group, the following programmes were developed:

a) Youth Employment Development. In order to extend and improve job opportunities for young people, occupational training was proposed and a training strategy was developed for the benefit of 5 000 young people. Various agreements were passed and consultancies held with national bodies such as the National Apprenticeship Service (SENA), the Ministry of Labour and organizations of the private sector;

b) Youth and Drug Prevention. Faced with the consumption of narcotic substances in broad cultural areas of the country's young population, this programme promoted actions to prevent consumption, particularly in urban and high-risk areas. Projects included the establishment of 27 youth centres in 14 towns, while initiatives by young people were supported in 10 towns, bringing benefits to 50 000 young people with no schooling. In addition, projects were developed as part of the Instructor Training Network for the prevention of drug abuse and the insertion of prevention in the curriculum, a scheme benefiting 200 000 students, 5 000 teachers, 50 000 parents and 200 educational bodies. Resources worth 2 050 million pesos were invested in these two projects;

c) Youth Tourism and the Environment. This project has taken the form of a training strategy with regard to coexistence, enhancement of nature and appreciation for our culture and our traditions. On the basis of an investment of 276 million pesos, 7 tourist hostels were opened in the towns of Cartagena, Bogotá, Medellín, Cali, Popayán, San Agustín and Villavicencio, in which 100 000 young people were accommodated;

d) Youth Card. This programme was launched as a facility to enable young people to obtain discounts, special offers and advantages in the use and acquisition of goods and services in the areas of art, culture, sport, commerce, tourism, health and education. The programme has covered 300 000 young people on the basis of a budget allowance of 1 909 million pesos.

e) National Sex Education Project. With a view to assisting the growth and full sexual development of children and young people, both within and outside the school system, strategies were implemented to provide training and support in the areas of self-esteem, independence, coexistence and health, in an effort to ensure that sexual knowledge, attitudes and behaviours are experienced by young people in a more genuine, responsible, gratifying and at the same time ethical manner. This programme has benefited one million students, 2 000 teachers and 3 000 public educational establishments. The Government invested resources worth 1 000 million pesos in its design and development;

f) Youth Organization and Participation Programme. This programme gave support to the organizational activities of young people and to the various mechanisms which the 1991 Constitution, the Youth Act and the Government have set up to strengthen the expression and participation of young people in civil society. The total coverage achieved by the programme was 150 000 young people across the country.

VI. HOUSING, DRINKING WATER AND BASIC SANITATION, AGRARIAN REFORM AND FOOD SECURITY (art. 11)

A. Housing

300. The methodology used to measure the housing deficit in Colombia distinguishes between quantitative and qualitative deficit. Recently (1997-1998), consultants of the Ministry of Economic Development proposed a methodology based on incidence and gap indicators to reflect housing needs. Also some poverty measurements include aspects of housing conditions.

301. The quantitative deficit is understood as the difference between the existing number of households and the existing number of dwellings. The qualitative deficit is the difference between what are considered to be the minimum conditions that housing should offer and those that are in fact available.

302. The last figure available for the housing deficit is for the year 1993, which was the time of the last Population and Housing Census. It may be summed up as follows:

Table 2

	Total	Urban	Rural
Total households	7,162,000	5,379,800	1,782,200
Households without deficit	3,836,100	3,292,200	543,900
Households with deficit	3,325,900	2,087,600	1,238,300
Households with quantitative deficit	1,265,900	862,200	403,700
Households with qualitative deficit in improvable housing	2,060,000	1,225,400	834,600

Source: Ministry of Economic Development

303. The deficit is concentrated in the lower strata of the population, especially in households with incomes of not more than four times the legal monthly minimum wage (SMLM), which account for 83% of the total national deficit (see table 3).

304. For the construction of housing in urban areas of Colombia after that date, and considering specifically the loans offered by savings and housing corporations (CAV) and the Central Mortgage Bank (BCH) for the construction of housing, which account for 70% of all housing finance, the figures are given in table 4.

Table 3

Income ranking	Total No. of households	Households in deficit	%
0 - 1	1,151,721	224,371	17.8
1 - 2	1,759,059	204,203	16.2
2 - 3	1,225,776	378,154	30.0
3 - 4	801,858	235,716	18.7
4 - 5	571,957	88,236	7.0
5 - 7	671,223	61,765	4.9
7 - 10	476,631	44,118	3.5
More than 10	503,775	23,950	1.9
Total	7,162,000	1,260,513	100.0

Source: Ministry of Economic Development.

Table 4

	CAV + BCH
1994	198,165
1995	235,247
1996	258,419
1997	350,836
1998	171,399
1999 (1 semester)	20,500

Source: ICAV and DNP (Planning Department) calculations.

305. Social housing for families with income less than four legal monthly minimum wages built during the period under study is summarized below:

Table 5

Number of individual loans for the purchase of social housing
(1994-1999)

	FNA	Housing funds	BCH	CAV	Commercial banks	Total
1994	1,859	1,625	0	14,941	0	18,425
1995	1,568	1,366	1,575	17,125	92	21,726
1996	261	141	785	22,448	862	24,497
1997	1,165	461	576	15,780	1,726	19,708
1998	239	239	819	12,615	3,719	20,304
1999*	350	120	353	6,521	1,120	8,464

* First semester

Source: DANE

306. As may be seen from the tables above, the construction of new housing is barely sufficient to cater for the number of new households, which, according to the calculations of the National Planning Department, amount to an average of 200 000 per year. This means that the quantitative housing deficit is hardly affected, and the measures taken so far are only sufficient to prevent it from growing even larger.

307. With regard to efforts to reduce the qualitative deficit, the resources earmarked for the improvement of existing housing and the immediate neighbourhood have been taken from the national budget and issued in the form of grants. For the period 1994-1998, while the target had been 260 635 grants, of that total only 113 917 were actually placed, equivalent to 44% of the total.

308. Among the difficulties observed in practice in the period 1990-1994, reports draw attention to inadequate municipal participation in policy implementation, excessive emphasis on plots of land with services and a lack of programmes of neighbourhood improvement. The 1994-1998 administration concentrated its efforts on the latter aspect. Nevertheless, the housing supply was affected by the restricted availability of urban land equipped with public services and included within urban limits, factors which raised the costs of social housing excessively and stimulated illegal urbanization in the larger towns. In addition, the removal of support for the system of programmed savings as a requirement for entitlement to grants made such grants the only means of acquiring housing for families that were unable to supplement the grant with their own resources and that had no access to the credit system.

309. Lastly, the grant policy to some extent went against decentralization, to the extent that the distribution and allotment of grants at national level did not take due account of the social and urban priorities of individual municipalities.

310. In other words, it became clear after a few years that the housing policy was excessively concentrated on the administration and distribution of grants, giving only secondary importance to other factors, which were nevertheless significant for the production of low-cost housing and for providing access to the poorest families.

311. The social housing policy in the period 1998-2002 is based on subsidizing demand for the purchase of new housing and plots based on minimum development units. It gives preference to minimum cost solutions linked to a scheme of progressive subsidies, reviving the system of programmed savings. The population targeted by this policy includes people with incomes below 4 times the minimum wage, giving preference to those with incomes below twice the minimum wage. The system will be given added transparency through more unified procedures of eligibility and supply promotion, and a standardized approach to claims and to the allocation and payment of grants to families. Plans have been made for the construction of 420 000 new social housing units (costing less than 200 times the minimum wage), of which 242 000 will be subsidized.

312. One of the programmes set in place to achieve this objective is the Double Grant Programme for people earning less than twice the minimum wage, which is supported by both municipal and national subsidies. The idea of the programme is to confirm the policy of decentralization and place the housing problem in the hands of local authorities. In addition, the Equal Rights Grants Programme is aimed chiefly at families with incomes between twice and three times the minimum wage, which is the population sector experiencing the greatest housing deficit. This programme aims to encourage the participation of the private sector by subsidizing demand and fostering programmed savings, while giving priority to lowest cost housing.

313. In view of the structural and economic conditions prevailing in the housing sector, the National Development Plan has pursued two further objectives, namely reducing the housing deficit which mostly affects the poorest sectors of the population and establishing a system of housing finance that allows more generalized access to Colombian families. The target is to produce 500 000 new housing units, in order to implement the planned objectives in practice. However, this target is still not enough to make up for the whole of the housing shortfall, since in view of the rate of population growth in the country and the growth in the number of new households, the amount of new housing planned will barely be enough to satisfy the requirements of new households, with little effect on the accumulated deficit.

314. The policy pursued by the Development Plan in its choice of programmes with a view to overcoming the housing deficit is aimed at extending the process of decentralization and therefore giving local authorities more say in the execution of programmes established in the National Housing Policy. As stipulated in the Development Plan document, decentralization "is a strategy that should cut across all other State strategies, not only as an instrument for its own reorganization but also as a mechanism for devolving real power to the social base and for encouraging the participation of the community in the establishment of joint commitments by the State and civil society to manage development."

315. In this respect, decentralization as applied to the housing policy should be understood as a real devolution of decision-making power to the local level, where the community and businessmen can effectively take part in establishing the strategies for their own housing development.

316. The measures considered necessary for tackling the housing deficit are as follows:

a) Increasing the supply of social housing. This objective can be achieved by coordinating the different components which the Government has been setting in place, namely the implementation of urban policy under the terms of Act No. 388 of 1997, efforts to reduce interest rates, an increase in the

guarantee fund for builders, the provision of loans to the building industry by the Industry Promotion Institute (IFI) and concentration on lower income sectors[41];

b) Increasing the supply of buildable and urbanized land. Thanks to the instruments established by Act No. 388 of 1997 and those of Act No. 142 of 1994, the traditional limitations on urban land equipped with services may be definitively overcome;

c) Reducing social housing transaction costs. This implies reducing the cost of local formalities and taxes, which have become a heavy burden in the purchase and production of social housing;

d) Introducing a system of progressive subsidies. The previous structure of grants had a regressive effect in practice, so that households with incomes close to the upper limit received greater subsidies. Two complementary measures were established, in Decrees Nos. 824 and 1538 of 1999, to restore the balance: firstly, the grants were better focussed by reducing the cost of housing; and secondly, grants were set at a single value of 25 times the minimum wage, so that their impact was progressive insofar as more funding was allowed for lower cost housing. The criteria for deciding which projects are eligible for grants are decided on the basis of an objective methodology established by the Ministry, taking into account the cost of the housing and its relation with the area built, the saving effort of beneficiaries, the size of families, their socio-economic situation and the degree of vulnerability to which women heads of household may be exposed;

e) Extending decentralized management of housing policies. Decentralization is a key element of housing policy. The Government's measures in this respect are as follows:

f) Identifying local demand in order to make sure that grants are used effectively and reach the population with the greatest unsatisfied needs;

g) Promoting municipal subsidies, based on the housing requirements of municipalities and the financial aids that local authorities bring to the programme;

h) Publishing the eligible housing supply in order to facilitate requests by those entitled. Attributions will be made on the basis of a methodology established by the Ministry of Development, which will apply to all types of subsidy;

i) Insofar as the grant system is intended to supplement the savings effort of requesting families, the criteria used to allocate grants will take account of planned savings, the continuity of requests and family income;

j) Urban macroprojects. This refers to the construction of high-impact urban areas, where the land is used for different purposes, allowing a fair distribution of charges and benefits, with different areas allocated for shops, urban amenities and social housing, based on previously approved urban planning and management schemes.

317. Measures implemented as part of the social housing programme must be supported by a long-term sectoral financial model and the development of a subsidiary mortgage market.

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[41] In the housing policy for the period 1999-2002, the grants for low income families are aimed primarily at the construction or acquisition of new housing and not for improvements, on the grounds that the construction sector needs to be reactivated in order to create new jobs.

318. The new policy implies institutional changes in the sector, as a means of adjusting to established priorities and new measures. In the first place, the National Institute for Social Housing and Urban Reform (INURBE) will concentrate on technical assistance to macroprojects and on assisting municipalities with the management of territorial development plans, particularly through measures aimed at the allocation and production of urban land guaranteeing effective implementation of social housing policies.

319. Secondly, there is the role played by family compensation funds. There is no doubt that these funds have made a considerable effort and have used significant resources to improve the housing of their members. Nevertheless, there is a need for greater coordination between the funds and the national housing policy. As a result, the funds will have to adapt the needs of their beneficiaries to the availability of projects deemed eligible by the municipalities, while grants will be allocated subject to the criteria established by national policies.

Measures benefiting the population affected by the earthquake in the coffee-growing region (Eje Cafetero)

320. It should be pointed out that, although the Government's political, social and economic policies are the outcome of planning and programming guidelines contained in the National Development Plan, variations may occur as a result of unforeseen situations, such as natural disasters. On 25 January 1999, an earthquake occurred with its epicentre in the municipality of Córdoba, department of Quindio, which seriously affected the urban and rural areas of the 29 municipalities in the coffee-growing region.

321 . More than 1 000 persons died as a result of the earthquake; another 5 000 were injured and more than 53 000 buildings were damaged. Housing and public buildings, such as schools, churches, stadiums and market places were also destroyed. As far as the service infrastructure was concerned, telecommunications and the sewerage network were the worst affected, especially in rural areas. Many roads and highways were also damaged, especially by landslides and fallen bridges. Other hazards included the diversion or damming of waterways.

322. According to a socio-economic survey of the affected area carried out by the DANE (Statistical Office), altogether 90 400 houses were damaged, of which 35 000 were totally destroyed.

323. Faced with this situation, the Government set up the Fund for the Reconstruction and Social Development of the Coffee-Growing Region (FOREC) as a body attached to the Administrative Department of the Office of the President of the Republic. The FOREC possesses special national status and legal personality; it has its own assets and is financially independent; it has no administrative structure of its own and its main office is in the town of Armenia.

324. The fund was supported at national level by the following bodies:

Name of Body	Resources (million pesos)
National Directorate for Disaster Prevention and Management	2,729
Telecom	225
Ingeominas	50
Forensic medicine	50
Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF)	500
Ministry of Defence	2,270

325. The main programmes undertaken by the Fund for the Reconstruction and Social Development of the Coffee-Growing Region (FOREC) in 1999 were as follows:

a) Urban sector housing grants 75 000

Value 400 000 million pesos

Amounts disbursed 141 000 million pesos

Number of beneficiaries 47 000

b) Housing projects in pilot programmes on plots acquired in the towns of Armenia, Pereira, Calarcá, Barcelona and Quimbaya:

Investment 12 000 million pesos

Number of beneficiaries 4 000

c) The FOREC put out a nation-wide call for offers for the construction of housing for people affected by the earthquake who needed relocating within the coffee-growing region in the municipality of Pereira. An estimated 2 500 families will be relocated under this programme.

d) Housing programmes for non-house owning families located in provisional accommodation. Almost 13 000 families were housed in provisional accommodation, according to the FOREC census. Since most of these families were not house owners, the Board decided alternative ways of funding the necessary housing, on the basis of family housing grants worth 5.9 million pesos (25 times the current legal monthly minimum wage). The alternatives were as follows:

1. Family Compensation Funds 35 000 million pesos for fund subscribers
25 000 million pesos for non-subscribers

Beneficiaries: 4 100 families.

In 1999, 1 711 grants were issued to non-house owning families worth 10 100 million pesos. Of these grants, 346 were given to families that were not enrolled in the compensation funds.

2. Donations

These are reserved for the most vulnerable population, who are not home owners and who live in temporary accommodation.

There are about 1 300 cash grants for housing offered by the FOREC.

The supplementary housing grant, not exceeding 3 million pesos per family, is provided by the FOREC for the purchase of plots of land and the necessary urbanization works. The total earmarked would amount to 3 900 million pesos.

Altogether 75 000 million pesos will be set aside to provide housing for another 13 000 persons affected.

e) For the rural sector, the FOREC added another 11 100 million pesos, bringing total funding for housing reconstruction in this area to 66 100 million pesos. A further 30 000 million pesos were budgeted for investments in other damaged infrastructures, such as aqueducts, sewage networks, and education and health facilities, bringing the FOREC total for the rural sector to 96 100 million pesos. By the end of 1999, the FOREC's commitment came to 813 280 million pesos. These resources were invested as follows:

Housing 46.89%
Joint contracts passed between FOREC and other public or private bodies 19.66%
Local action plans 11.68%
Rural sector rehabilitation 10.77%

Housing subsidies:

Approved	81 000 grants	381 000 million pesos
Disbursed	59 819 grants	194 145 million pesos

B. Drinking water and basic sanitation

326. According to quality of life survey data, piped water coverage in 1993 was 80.0% (94% urban and 41% rural, rising to 85.6% in 1997 (98% urban and 49% rural). Sewerage coverage followed a similar trend, rising from 59.4% in 1985 to 63.3% in 1993 and 70.8% by 1997. The situation is particularly critical in the rural sector, where according to the National Household Survey conducted by the DANE in 1997, the coverage figure for piped water supply is 44% and for sewerage 16%. The best results are to be found among the urban population in all the deciles with rates above 96%, while in the rural sector more than half the population in the bottom two quintiles and almost 40% of the upper quintiles are still not covered.

327. Moreover, coverage tends to differ considerably from one region to another. For Bogotá, Atlántico, Quindío, Risaralda and Valle, sewerage coverage is above 95%, while a third of all housing in departments such as Cauca, Chocó, Caquetá, Córdoba, Bolívar, Boyacá, Magdalena, Nariño, Sucre and la Guajira has no sewerage.

328. During the period under consideration, the water supply and basic sanitation programmes concentrated on extending coverage and improving quality.

329. In 1995, 35% of allocated resources were used to carry out 88 surveys in 75 municipalities, with priority being given to the largest. As far as the distribution of available resources was concerned, it may be noted that the municipalities made a significant contribution by offering credit covering 50% of the necessary funding. Most of these pre-investment resources went to the Atlantic coast region (54%), followed by the western region (31%), central eastern (11%) and Orinoquía (3%).

1. Investment in infrastructure projects

330. Support for local authority projects. The national resources committed in 1995 were used to support investment projects in 600 municipalities across the country. This represents municipal coverage of 57%, sufficient to support many of the priority projects submitted by local authorities. According to the size of the municipalities involved, 85% of the population was assisted in those with more than 100 000 inhabitants, 70% in those with populations between 20 000 and 100 000 inhabitants, and 50% in

those below 20 000 inhabitants. For rural areas and especially for municipalities smaller than 50 000 inhabitants, 23% of the resources were channelled through the DRI (Integrated Rural Development) and the Caja Agraria.

331. In 1995 and 1996, the Government, on the basis of appropriate legislation, supported the implementation of major investment projects in drinking water and basic sanitation in the country's main cities, such as Bogotá, Barranquilla, Cartagena, Montería, San Andrés, Pereira, Cali and Buenaventura.

2. Technical assistance and training

332. The Water Plan established the need to foster and strengthen local management capacity for planning, implementing, monitoring and assessing projects and for setting up an institutional and operational basis for drinking water and basic sanitation services. In pursuit of these objectives, the Directorate for Drinking Water and Sanitation has planned the following projects, which are to be carried out by the departments and municipalities.

333. System of Inter-Institutional Support for Drinking Water and Basic Sanitation Services. This programme has promoted the creation and strengthening of Departmental Water Units in 25 departments (of which 12 are operating satisfactorily). These units are to be responsible for providing guidance and support to municipalities throughout the project and to produce a multiplier effect with regard to tools and products developed at national level.

334. The "Water Culture" programme has encouraged an attitude of participation in the community, so that the latter will undertake to manage, administer and supervise its own systems. Through projects such as the Water Defence Clubs, Water is my Friend, Let us Organize our Enterprise and Education Days, covering 32 departments, 27 inter-institutional committees have been set up and 25 operational plans have been drafted benefiting 130 municipalities.

335. Operator Training and Certification programme. This programme has developed a system of formal distance training for auxiliary workers, skilled workers, operators and technicians. It has designed the necessary teaching material and has initiated 60 training workshops covering practical subjects, which have been attended by 1 509 officials from 327 municipalities across the country.

3. Full service quality

336. The objectives of measures taken in this area include the quality of water, reliability and loss control in supply systems, protection of basins and rational use of water, and environmental improvement. The Ministry of Health introduced the Information System on the Quality of Water and Sanitation (SICAS), administered by departmental and local health departments. The drinking water quality control programme has improved the analysis of water in public health laboratories, operating as a network through the National Health Institute (National Reference Laboratory). The latter is used as a base for the Epidemiological Monitoring System, as well as for the certification and approval of regional laboratories.

337. From the point of view of environmental improvement, several projects have been undertaken for the treatment and final disposal of waste waters in cities such as Bogotá, Cali and Medellín, while other projects for Pereira, Cartagena, Buenaventura and San Andrés, amongst others, are currently under evaluation. There is a need, however, for establishing a sanitation policy in coordination with the Ministry of the Environment, in order to consider the technological aspects of available infrastructure and its adaptability to the country's climatic and institutional conditions. The longer-term objectives

would be to ensure the sustainability of the works undertaken, the self-recovery capacity of basins and waterways, and to assess investment and operating costs as well as the impact of tariffs.

338. The objectives of the water and basic sanitation policy of the 1998-2002 National Development Plan "Change for Building Peace" are to "create the necessary institutional, financial, regulatory and control conditions to govern the action of national bodies and to allow service institutions to modernize and to achieve greater management efficiency."

339. The water supply plan should benefit 4.5 million inhabitants and the sewerage system plan 5.9 million in rural and urban areas. In municipalities with a coverage above 90% already, priority will be given to improving the quality of water.

340. As the water and sanitation policy is developed, service suppliers should be able of their own accord to close the gaps in terms of water supply and sanitation coverage between regions and between urban and rural areas, as well as to improve the quality of water, while at the same time giving priority to the lower income population. In coordination with the environment policy, an effort will be made to determine the water supply balance with more certainty and to identify the weak points in supply sources, as well as to devise and implement a plan for the treatment of waste water which would be economically, socially and environmentally viable.

C. Agrarian reform

341. Although in its first 33 years the agrarian reform entailed a considerable institutional effort, with the intake of 1.6 million hectares benefiting approximately 82 403 families, and the transfer of title over 11.3 million hectares to 364 029 families of settlers (including 4.6 million hectares resulting from the termination of ownership), that was not sufficient to achieve the hoped-for impact on the structure of rural property. Thus the concentration of property as measured by the Gini index remains practically unchanged, improving only slightly from 0.832 to 0.802 in the period 1961-1994.

342. An attempt was made with Act No. 160 of 1994 to remedy the shortcomings observed in the application of Act No. 30 of 1988, in particular in relation to the State's intervention in the purchase and allocation of land, to the coordination of actions in addition to those of the land programme conducted by bodies such as the Colombian Agrarian Reform Institute (INCORA), which did not enjoy convening powers owing to its administrative ranking within the State administration, and the ineffectiveness of coordinating bodies, which had only consultative status.

343. The new Act established the National Agrarian Reform and Rural Development System as the authority for planning, coordination, implementation and evaluation of all activities concerned with the redistribution of land and the development of the rural economy, under the direction of the Ministry of Agriculture and Rural Development. In addition, in order to introduce agrarian reform regionally, consultative bodies were set up at departmental level (departmental committees on rural development and agrarian reform) and at municipal level (municipal rural development councils).

344. In order to reduce the degree of State intervention, special procedures were introduced to facilitate access to land for entitled peasants, enabling them to participate in negotiations and in deciding and planning future production. They were also encouraged to negotiate supplementary credits worth 30% in addition to the Family Farming Units (UAFs) with the financial sector, as well as other loans required for the further development of the project. The State's role was then reduced to offering advice during the procedures at the request of beneficiaries.

345. In the settlement areas, the new Act also set aside reserved agricultural areas with a view to establishing medium-sized producers by granting them family farming units and assisting them economically through the mechanisms of the National Agrarian Reform and Rural Development System.

346. The scheme includes the formulation of plans for the development of peasant reserve areas under the authority and with the participation of local mayors and organizations representing the peasants and the public and private sectors, working through the municipal rural development councils, set up under Act No. 160 of 1994 as coordinating and consultative bodies.

Scope of the 1995-2002 agrarian reform

347. The targets established in the Government's Agrarian Reform Plan for 1995-1997 included the redistribution of 1.0 million hectares for the benefit of approximately 75 764 families (including 64 336 peasant families and 11 428 indigenous families) and the transfer of title over 5.0 million uncultivated hectares to 103 778 families of settlers and black communities[42].

348. After the plan had been in operation for three years, a total of 2 657 486 hectares had been redistributed, benefiting 28 714 families of peasants, indigenous people, settlers and black communities. Particularly noteworthy were the benefits obtained for indigenous communities, with the constitution of 120 reservations representing 26.3% of all constituted reservations.

349. In practice, the limitations encountered with the plan were due to factors such as the following:

a) The inexperience of the planning, coordination and consultation bodies set up under Act No. 160 of 1994, such as the departmental committees for rural development and agrarian reform and the municipal rural development councils.

b) The fact that the issue of grants for the negotiation of rural buildings was made conditional on the approval of land credits.

c) A persistent imbalance between land supply and demand due to the low negotiating capacity of peasants, the lack of a pricing information system and the influence of non-economic factors affecting land.

d) A series of budget cuts applied as a result of restrictions in public expenditure.

350. In order to deal with these problems, the 1998-2002 National Development Plan, "Change for Building Peace" proposes promoting agrarian reform through mechanisms facilitating the use of a comprehensive, efficient, transparent and innovative model. Voluntary negotiation and the individual or collective purchase of land will be encouraged, as part of concrete production projects, implemented on a decentralized basis subject to public supervision. An attempt will be made to involve the private sector in agrarian reform programmes in the form of financial or land contributions, or projects for productive cooperation aimed at sustainably reactivating the country's agriculture. A real effort will also be made to terminate the ownership of lands acquired with money derived from illegal activities or lands exploited well below their full potential.

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[42] Based on the size of Family Farming Units: 45 hectares for individuals and 100 hectares for groups.

D. Food security

351. The agrarian reform was aimed chiefly at redistributing rural property and making available extra services to assist the development and consolidation of a sector of small producers. Although food security was not one of its basic goals, this has benefited indirectly from the establishment of improved procedures for access to land, the issue of grants to small farmers and the provision of technical assistance.

352. There were some other factors that also favoured food security in Colombia. At the beginning of the 1970s, both the public and the private sectors set up major research and technological development centres for the agricultural and stockbreeding sector. These new centres assisted the transfer of technologies, crop diversification, and the production and improvement of seeds and agricultural inputs, apart from mobilizing considerable human and financial resources.

353. Despite these achievements, however, resources are still too dispersed and the actions taken by the different bodies are not sufficiently coordinated to optimize the use of available resources. The proliferation of illegal crops and drug trafficking are additional factors that make it difficult to achieve satisfactory standards of food security, insofar as they lead to the substitution of other crops for food crops and to distortions in land prices, while they encourage corruption and increased violence.

354. The Colombian Government has tabled a new Agrarian Reform Bill before Congress, aimed at overcoming the problems of poverty and inequality in the rural sector by facilitating access to land for the poorest people, by ensuring the efficient use of land, by creating jobs and by improving the incomes of settlers. At the same time, agrarian reform has been made one of the central topics of Peace Negotiations, and to this extent it is hoped that the outcome of these negotiations will add further impetus to the reform's objectives. Nevertheless, although Colombia has not had to face food security problems on the scale of some other developing countries, there is no doubt that the adoption and implementation of a policy in this respect should not be delayed any longer.

VII. EDUCATION

A. Illiteracy

355. As may be seen from table 6, illiteracy rates have diminished significantly, especially in urban centres. While in 1973 the rate was above 10%, by 1997 it had fallen to less than 6%.

Table 6

Illiteracy by area and age group.
All persons over 15 years of age, 1997

	Urban	Rural	Total
	%		
15 a 39	2,0	14,0	4,9
40 a 64	8,6	30,1	14,2
65 and over	17,8	45,7	26,0
Total	5,3	22,2	9,6

Source: Calculations by the Human Development Corporation, based on EPCV97 and CASEN93.

356. The rate of illiteracy for persons over 15 years of age by gender[43] fell for men from 9.9 to 8.7 between 1993 and 1997 and for women from 9.8 to 8.5. It should be borne in mind, of course, that there are significant differences between departments and between rural and urban areas. The highest illiteracy rates are found in the departments of the Atlantic Coast, with the exception of Atlántico, and of the Pacific Coast, with the exception of Valle del Cauca. Meanwhile, Boyacá, Caquetá, Norte de Santander, Santander and Tolima have rates above 10% and all rural areas have rates varying around 20%.

357. For the 15-24 age group, the national illiteracy rate is 3.5%, representing 258 083 persons, which compared with the total population in this age group is relatively low. The gender difference is not significant, with a rate of 3.0% for men and 2.9% for women.

358. The current levels of illiteracy may be explained chiefly by the fact that children either do not go to school or drop out early in primary schooling. These factors are due rather to structural problems which lie outside the scope of the education sector proper and which will need to be overcome before the efforts to reduce illiteracy are reflected in lower rates.

B. Pre-school education

359. In accordance with the terms of the Constitution and the General Education Act, an effort to consolidate pre-school education was made with the establishment of a compulsory pre-school grade in public schooling.

360. The figures show that in 1997 pre-school education had limited coverage and was unequally distributed among the population. In that year, 32% of children between 3 and 5 years of age attended pre-school education, and the net coverage rate rose only from 21% in 1994 to 29% in 1997. The effect was that 4 out of every 5 children in the top 40% of the population attended pre-school education, compared with only 1 in every 5 children out of the poorest 40%.

361. Apart from low coverage and unequal distribution, the pre-school assessment identified other obstacles in the way of achieving set objectives:

a) There is not enough linkage between formal pre-school education and other childcare programmes;

b) There is little recognition of the importance of early schooling for the education of people. The capacities and abilities of teachers tend to suffer as a result;

c) There is a lack of technological support and teaching material to develop children's creativity.

362. In 1997, after a broad-ranging analysis of the situation, Decree No. 2247 was drafted and promulgated, with the aim of promoting and developing the further training of departmental, municipal and district working groups and of teachers and principals connected with pre-school education. Agreements were passed with governmental and non-governmental organizations to improve the quality of life of children attending pre-school education, while local authorities were encouraged to promote and support pre-school education and to ensure that it was included in local development plans.

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[43] National Planning Department – Social Mission. Calculations based on DANE, 1993 Population Census and DANE, National Household Survey, September 1993 and September 1997.

363. Within the framework of technical assistance measures, and on the basis of joint financing by the central Government and the municipalities, it was possible to introduce the compulsory pre-school grade in 750 municipalities in 32 departments and 4 districts.

C. Basic education[44]

364. Primary school enrolment has grown a steady 2% annually since 1985, whereas the rate of growth for secondary education has been double that figure (rising from 4.3% in 1993 to 5.1% in 1997), with growth accelerating in the 1990s. In both cases, the rate of growth of enrolment is greater than the rate of growth of the population for the corresponding age group, which is particularly significant in secondary schooling, where the overall population has been growing at an average annual rate of 1%. As a result, there has been a slow but steady increase in the coverage and in the average number of years of schooling. The gross coverage rate[45] for primary education in 1995 (Sarmiento and Caro, 1997) was 105% and 113% in 1997. This represents an increase of 8.2% and annual growth of 0.7%. For secondary schooling, the gross coverage rate was 52.36% in 1985 and 80.42% in 1997, which implies an annual growth rate of 2.34% (Sarmiento and Caro, 1998). Taking the supply of primary and secondary education together, overall coverage in 1997 was 76% of the school population between the ages of 4 and 17.

365. Gross overall coverage for basic education is higher among women than among men, which tends to indicate that there are no obvious discriminatory factors in schools based on gender.

366. The efforts made to raise the quality of education appear to be reflected in the improvements in internal efficiency indicators for the Colombian educational system. In this respect, there has been a slight increase in grade promotion, and a decrease in repetition and dropout. For the country as a whole, the promotion rate in basic primary education increased from 81.8% in 1993 to 83.5% in 1997. In secondary education, for the same period, the indicator rose from 78.5% to 84.2%. The dropout rate in the period, for primary and secondary education, fell from 7.4% to 6.4% and from 7.0% to 3.0% respectively.

367. The repetition rate followed a similar trend to that of the dropout rate. For the country as a whole in primary school the rate fell from 10.8% to 10.0% and in secondary education from 14.5% to 12.8% between 1993 and 1997. By sectors, the variation was similar to the change that occurred for the country as a whole in both educational levels.

368. In basic and intermediate education, the population left outside the school system is distributed as follows: in Grade 0 (children of 5 years of age), 369 000; in basic primary (aged 6-10), 749 000; in basic secondary (aged 11-14), 1 010 000; and in intermediate school (15-16 age group), 755 000 children.

369. There are several reasons why children do not attend school. Firstly, there are supply limitations, such as a shortage of places and the distance between the school and the children in need of education.

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[44] A. Sarmiento and Blanca L. Caro (1997) "La educación en cifras: avances en el período 1985-1997" (Education in figures: progress achieved in the period 1985-1997). Social Mission, Social Development Unit, National Planning Department. Bogotá, June.

[45] A 113% gross coverage rate for primary education means that the primary education system has enough resources (in terms of teachers, classrooms and posts) to cater for 13% more than all children between the ages of 7 and 11. In secondary education, there is a 20% shortfall of resources in relation to coverage for all children between the ages of 12 and 17.

Secondly, there are demand limitations derived from the need to work, education costs, the lack of relevance of education contents and social problems caused by the armed conflict.

370. Opportunities of access to education are distributed unequally: in the group of children aged 7 to 11, only 87% of the poorest 20% attend primary school, while all children in the top 10% in terms of income are enrolled at that level. This difference is even greater for the age group 12 to 17, the population concerned with secondary schooling, where only 2 out of every 3 of the poorest children can attend school compared with 88% among the wealthiest.

371. Differences by departments and areas are equally marked. Average school attendance in rural areas, for children over 5 years of age, was 3.2 years in 1997, compared with 6.8 years in urban areas. In the 7 largest cities, the comparable figure was 7.5 years in 1997. Practically the entire supply of places in pre-school education is concentrated in the urban sector.

372. Primary school coverage in the 7 largest cities is practically universal. On the other hand, in some departments, especially in those along the two coastlines, in rural areas and in the poorest municipalities, both coverage and promotion in primary education are well below the national standard. In territorial terms, secondary school attendance is even more unequal than in primary. The supply of secondary school places in rural areas is practically non-existent. Secondary education is much more widespread in the more developed departments and municipalities, just as it is concentrated in the medium and high-income families.

1. Primary school enrolment by sector, area and gender

373. Between 1985 and 1997, public primary school enrolment rose from 3.3 million to 4 million children and in the private sector from 664 000 to 1.1 million. The growth rate in public primary schooling was well below that in the private sector: 1.5% compared with 4.3% annually respectively. As a result, the proportion of primary schooling accounted for by the private sector rose from 16.6 to 21.8% for all enrolment at this level. This relative rise of private primary schooling occurred in all departments except Nariño, Sucre, Caldas, Boyacá, Magdalena and Chocó.

374. The increase in state-run school enrolment was greater than the national average in some of the regions with lower standard of living indices in 1997[46], such as Chocó, Sucre, Nariño, Magdalena, Guajira, Caquetá and Cauca. This tends to indicate that the public sector effort is greater in the poorer regions.

375. According to area, primary school enrolment in urban areas rose from 2.5 to 3.2 million and in rural areas from 1.4 to 1.8 million children, growing at an annual rate of 2.1% and 1.9% respectively. On a national level, the proportion of enrolment between urban and rural areas tended to remain the same over time (around 64% and 36% respectively). The departments where rural enrolment is still more than half the total primary school enrolment are Córdoba, Boyacá, Caquetá, Cauca, Chocó, Nariño, Tolima and the former National Territories.

376. It is worth noting, however, that rural primary enrolment grew in 12 years by almost 400 000 pupils. In departments like Antioquia, it grew by more than 82 000; in Bolívar, Nariño and the former National Territories between 30 000 and 39 000, and in Tolima, Cauca and Córdoba, between 20 000 and 25 000. On the other hand, in traditionally rural departments such as Boyacá and Chocó, rural primary schooling grew by only 10 000 and a little less than 7 000 respectively.

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[46] Index calculated by the Social Mission on the basis of the National Quality of Life Survey.

377. According to gender, the enrolment of girls rose from 1.9 to 2.5 million and of boys from 2 to 2.6 million. For the national total, the primary school enrolment distribution tends to remain around 51% for boys and 49% for girls. These proportions recur with only very small changes in all departments, except for Antioquia and the former National Territories, where women account for around 51% of total enrolment.

2. Internal efficiency in primary education

378. The internal efficiency indicators have improved substantially, with higher rates of promotion and lower rates of repetition and dropout. Although differences persisted in favour of private education and urban education, these differences were attenuated in the period under study. For the national total, between 1985 and 1997, the promotion rate in primary education rose from 77% to 83.5%. In 1985, there was a 14-point difference in the promotion rates of the public and private sectors, and only 10 points in 1997. Public sector education increased its promotion rate by 7.2 points, rising from 74.3% to 81.5%, while the same figure in the private sector increased by 3 points, from 88.3% to 91.4% (as the rates were higher to start with, the marginal increases were smaller).

379. Similarly, in 1985, the difference between urban and rural promotion rates was 14 points and in 1997 only 10 points. The promotion rate rose by 5 points in urban primary education, from 83% to 87%, while it rose by 9.6 points in rural primary education, from 68.4% to 77.6%. These figures probably reflect the introduction of new school methodologies, which sought to improve not only the quality of rural education, but also retention and promotion.

380. Promotion rates among women continued to be higher than those for men (while repetition and dropout rates for women were lower), although in both cases they increased by 5.5 points on average. In the case of women, the figure rose from 78.8% to 84.5% and in the case of men from 76.6% to 82%.

381. When efficiency was measured using cohort indicators, the national total showed an annual increase in the retention rate of 1.4% between cohorts initiating primary education in 1978 and those starting in 1991[47]. In effect, the accumulated rise in the retention rate over 13 years was 38.4%, so that the rate was 47% for the 1978-82 cohort and 65.1% for the 1991-95 cohort.

382. The increase in the average number of years of schooling (i.e. the average years of schooling for pupils starting the cohort), while less spectacular since the increase in 13 years was 0.7 years, nevertheless produced a proportional improvement of 21.4%. On the other hand, the average time spent in primary schooling improved by only 3%. In other words, while the increase in retention reflects a significant decrease in the dropout rate, repetition continues to have a significant effect because the average time spent in primary schooling diminishes very little.

383. If the behaviour of cohorts is disaggregated by sector, the cohorts initiating primary school in 1985 and in 1991 show an increase of 13% in the retention rate in public sector schooling, which rose from 54% to 60.5%, but only 2% in private sector primary schooling, which rose from 80.5% to 82.5%.

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[47] The results of the cohort analysis in this year are compared with those of the study on the internal efficiency of the Colombian educational system in primary education (1961-1983) carried out by the statistical office of the Ministry of Education in 1985. Comparisons have been made whenever the cohorts are suitably disaggregated (total, area and gender).

384. The behaviour of cohorts according to area shows considerable differences. In 13 years, the retention rate in urban primary schooling rose by 99% and in rural primary education by 150%. This meant that the retention rate in urban primary education rose from 40.7% to 80.8%, and in rural primary schooling from 18.3% to 46%. Over the same period, average urban schooling rose by 16% (from 3.7 to 4.4 years), while the rural average rose by 70%, from 1.7 to almost 3 years. Average time, however, did not diminish significantly in either of the two areas.

385. What the figures for rural education indicate is very significant. The expansion of new schooling initiated up to the middle of the 1980s broke the stagnation in rural primary education. It would appear, then, that the problem with the new schooling is one of sustainability rather than expansion. This is consistent with what was mentioned above, regarding the fact that the improvement in the rate of retention was quicker in the public sector than in the private sector and more effective in rural areas than in urban areas.

386. Lastly, when differences are observed by gender, the improvements in retention rates were similar for girls and for boys (40% and 39% respectively). Also average school attendance increased by 25% and 24% respectively. These improvements meant a rise in the retention rate of 18 points for boys, which rose from 46.2% to 64%, and 19 points for girls, where it rose from 47.8% to 67%. Average school attendance for boys and girls increased from 3 to 3.7 years and from 3.1 to 3.8 years respectively.

D. Secondary education

1. Secondary school enrolment by sector, area and gender

387. From 1985 to 1997, secondary school enrolment in the public sector rose from 1.4 to 2.7 million pupils and in the private sector from 910 000 to 1.3 million. The growth of secondary education has been led by the public sector, which has risen at an annual rate far exceeding that of the private sector, at 5.3% compared with 3.2%. As a result, public sector secondary education rose as a proportion of total enrolment in secondary schooling from 61% to 67%. This relative increase was observed in all departments except for Caquetá, La Guajira and Valle.

388. The departments where public sector enrolment grew most were Meta, Huila, Nariño, Santander, Córdoba, Bolivar, Cauca, Magdalena, Boyacá and Sucre. All these departments, except Santander, had the highest rates of poverty in the country in 1997. This shows that public policy has tended to place a greater emphasis on the poorer regions. The 1997 Quality of Life Survey, which shows data according to households' place of residence (and not according to the location of schools) shows that for urban areas, public sector secondary education rose in the three poorest deciles of the population, while in rural areas enrolment has grown among the poorest sectors, but even more so in the high-income deciles. In other words, families living in rural areas are increasingly sending their children to secondary school.

389. By area, urban secondary education increased from 2.2 to 3.7 million pupils and rural secondary education from 132 000 to 323 000. The highest growth in secondary education occurred in rural areas. While urban secondary grew at an annual rate of 4.3%, rural secondary grew at a rate of 7.4%. Rural secondary education, as a result, with an increase in enrolment of almost 200 000 pupils, increased its share of the national total from 5.6% to 8%. With the exception of Bogotá, Meta and the former National Territories, in all departments rural secondary education increased as a share of the total. In absolute terms, the greatest increases occurred in Antioquia, Valle, Cundinamarca, Boyacá, Bolívar and Tolima. This growth in rural secondary school enrolment reflects the recent trend for private educational establishments to locate in the rural area of towns or their neighbouring municipalities.

390. According to gender, while the enrolment of girls rose from 1.2 to 2.1 million, the figure for boys rose from 1.1 to 1.9 million. For the national total, the distribution of secondary education enrolment by gender tended to remain the same, with a predominance of female enrolment (47% and 53%). With the exception of Nariño, female enrolment accounted for between 51% and 56% of secondary school enrolment for all departments taken together.

2. Internal efficiency in secondary education

391. Internal efficiency indicators in secondary education have improved substantially. For the national aggregate, promotion in secondary schools rose from 76.6% to 84.2%, while dropout fell from 9.6% to 3%.

392. Although differences subsisted in favour of private sector education, efficiency in public sector secondary schools advanced significantly, reducing the difference between the two sectors. In 1985, the difference between the rates of promotion in public and private sectors was 7 points but only 4 points in 1997. Public sector secondary education increased its promotion rate by 10 points, from 70.8% to 80.9%, while private sector promotion increased by 7 points, from 78.1%, to 85.2%. Dropout in the public sector schools fell from 10% to 5% and in private schools from 7.4% to 3.4%.

393. For girls, promotion rates continue to be higher than for boys (and their repetition and dropout rates lower). However, the gap was reduced. In 1985, the difference in promotion by gender was 3.6 points in favour of girls, and in 1997 only 2.4 points. The same trend occurred with dropout rates. While in 1985 the difference was 2 points, by 1997 it had fallen to 1 point. In the case of girls, the promotion rate rose from 76.5% to 85.7%, and for boys from 73% to 83.3%. For girls, dropout rate fell from 8.4% to 3.6% and for boys from 10.4% to 4.5%.

394. Internal efficiency improvements in secondary education were greater than in primary education. For the national total, with an annual growth rate of 1.6% in the retention rate between cohorts starting secondary in 1978 and in 1991, the accumulated growth over 13 years of that rate was 54% (compared with 38% in primary education), with the effect that the rate rose from 39% for the 1978-83 cohort to 60.3% for the 1991-96 cohort.

395. The increase in average years of schooling (the average number of years of schooling for pupils initiating the cohort) was 32% (compared to 21% for primary education), rising from 3.2 to 4.2 years. The average time taken to complete secondary school improved by 5.8% (compared with 3% in primary), falling from 7.4 to 6.9 years. Thus rising rates of retention and falling completion times were accompanied by a significant decrease in dropout and repetition rates.

396. By sector, although the retention rate continued to be higher in the private sector, among the cohorts initiating secondary school in 1978 and in 1991, the increase in the retention rate in public sector schooling rose to 69% compared with 63%. Thus in public sector secondary school, retention rose from 36.5% to 61.8% and in private secondary schooling from 42.7% to 69.6%. Average school attendance rose by 45% and 33% in public sector schooling and private sector education respectively. In the former, it rose from 3 to 4.3 years and in the latter from 3.5 to 4.6 years.

397. In 6 years, between the 1985 and 1991 cohorts, urban secondary schooling increased its retention rate from 61% to 74% and average school attendance from 4.3 to 4.9 years.

398. Lastly, looking at differences by gender, the improvement in the retention rate was greater for boys than for girls (24% compared with 16%). The rate for boys rose from 46.8% to 60.6% and for girls from 56.6% to 66%. At the same time, average schooling increased by 16% and 10% for boys and

for girls, rising from 3.7 to 4.3 years and from 4.1 to 4.5 years respectively. As a result, the gap between boys and girls narrowed. In 1985, the difference in retention rates was almost 8 points, but in 1997 this had fallen to 5 points, while the differences in average schooling were 0.42 points and 0.24 points respectively.

E. Higher education

399. Despite the increase in the gross coverage rate of higher education from 12.3% in 1993 to 18.9% in 1997[48], access is still very unequal. The richest 20% have 2.6 times more chances of accessing higher education than the poorest. Altogether, only 12% of students come from the poorest 50% and of these, two-thirds are studying in private universities.

400. The quality of higher education has suffered on account of the proliferation of university institutions and programmes that do not meet minimum requirements or which have wrongly interpreted the concept of university autonomy, or on account of a State-designed regulation system that is still weak and contradictory. The National Development Plan "Change for building peace" proposes to extend the credit system through the Colombian Institute for Educational Loans and Technical Studies Abroad (ICETEX) in order to extend coverage and introduce a fairer credit system as a means of improving equal access to higher education. Special emphasis will be placed on maintenance loans, chiefly for strata 1-3.

401. The improvement in the quality of higher education is to be achieved through teacher training programmes and by improving the academic standard of public higher education institutions. An effort is also being made to develop the scientific and technological capacities of universities by subsidizing Masters degree and Doctorate programmes in public universities. Improvements will also be made in the quality and relevance of technological education and in the participation of young people in these programmes.

F. Education financing

402. The structure of education funding in Colombia[49] underwent profound changes in the 1990s, both as regards its sources and the way the funds were used. These changes, which were inspired by the 1991 Constitution, began to appear in practice in 1993 with the passing of the Powers and Resources Act, which gave more independence to the departments and municipalities in the management of resources and the administration of the service.

403. Government policies in the area of education funding in recent years have been compatible with current theories of economic development that attribute a strategic value to investments in human capital. The effect has been for the country to make a greater financial effort to increase public expenditure on education by earmarking specific revenues to that effect.

404. In addition to establishing responsibilities for different levels of the administration with regard to the provision of social services (including education, health, culture, recreation and sport), the Powers and Resources Act established two types of transfers, aimed at earmarking a percentage of the country's current revenues, i.e. tax revenues and municipal contributions. Tax revenues are transferred to

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[48] Based on the Casen Survey and on the 1997 Quality of Life Survey. For the population aged between 20 and 24, the rates for the two years would be 28% and 38%.

[49] Ministry of Education - 1999 - Education for All Programme. Evaluation in the year 2000.

departments and districts, while municipal contributions go to municipalities, districts and indigenous reservations. The law also introduced new criteria for the distribution of transfers and for channelling social expenditure to the neediest strata of the population.

405. The departments and districts use the resources derived from tax revenues to cover their teaching staff costs and administrative expenses, including employers' and social security contributions, as well as the general expenses of educational establishments. Approximately 90% of these resources are used to fund teaching staff. Municipal contributions, on the other hand, are assigned primarily to inputs which contribute to enhancing the quality of education, such as books, libraries and educational materials, buildings and the improvement and maintenance of educational premises. Until 1992, all resources invested in the educational sector were allocated directly to departments and municipalities and were managed through a fund in the Ministry of Education. From 1993 until 1998, some resources were retained at national level and used in the form of a specialized fund, the Social Investment Fund, for the purpose of encouraging local investment through a system of cofinancing. In the early years, the funds were allocated on the basis of technical and sectoral criteria, such as enrolled population, potential population, vulnerable population and targets regarding coverage, quality and efficiency of resource management, with the territorial authorities being required to submit projects and contribute the equivalent on average of 20% of the total cost of each project.

406. In addition, partly as a result of the reduced shares of departments and partly of the higher costs of education due to salary increases and incentives granted by the Government to teaching staff between 1996 and 1998, a new transitional funding source was introduced for the educational sector, in the form of the Education Compensation Fund.

407. It should also be pointed out that in the last decade government expenditure on education was partially financed from external credit resources, to the tune of US$ 190 million provided by the World Bank, which were used to extend the coverage and improve the quality of primary and secondary education. It is also worth mentioning inputs arising from Act No. 21 of 1982, based on 1% of the value of public sector enrolment at national and local level and which originally were intended to fund technical support for secondary schools and which more recently have been used to finance special computing and software programmes for the study of English and other languages. The departments and municipalities also contribute to education funding to a lesser extent, by setting aside resources from their own revenues to fund operating and investment expenditure, placing the emphasis on teaching staff costs.

408. From 1994 to 1996, 50% of public expenditure on education was financed from tax revenues, a share which fell to 45% between 1997 and 1998 owing to a fall in the country's current income. These resources were replaced by the Education Compensation Fund, which in 1997 financed about 8% of total expenditure. By order of magnitude, municipal contributions on average covered 10% of the sector's expenses; a further 5% was covered by cofinancing resources in 1995, which dwindled to only 2% by 1998. The resources allocated from the national budget through the Ministry of Education account for 9% of total public expenditure on education.

409. As far as total expenditure on the sector was concerned, the departments and municipalities devoted only 10% of their own revenues to education. As a result, as central government transfers have increased proportionately, the funding share of departments and municipalities has been reduced. This situation has grown worse in recent years, so that local authorities have become more dependent on central government resources. This effect is further accentuated whenever social, economic and political circumstances give rise to poverty and exclusion. These factors limit the ability of local authorities to pursue their policy of extending coverage and improving the quality of education at local level.

G. Education expenditure trend[50]

410. In this decade, the growth of public expenditure in the educational sector tended to vary according to the financial policies applied in the sector and the flow of resources allocated by the Government in the light of the state of its own revenues. Thus in terms of constant 1994 pesos, the highest growth was recorded in 1992, 1994, 1996 and 1999. In 1994 in particular, public expenditure on education grew by 19% in real terms. That was the year when the budget of the educational sector began to reflect the increased resources arising from the transfers of tax revenues, which undoubtedly constituted the most dynamic source of growth in the 1990s. While at the beginning of the decade those transfers amounted to 1.6% of GDP, by 1997 they had risen to 2.4%.

411. In the period 1997-1998, public expenditure on education was significantly rationalized in real terms, owing to the policies of restriction and rationalization of public expenditure imposed by the central Government. For the year 2000, as a result of the country's tight revenues, the sector's budget is expected to decrease by 14.1%, which is bound to affect both expansion and improvement plans.

412. Private spending on education is equivalent to 4.1% of GDP. Of that amount, 60% goes on the supply of private education, and the remainder on subsidiary expenses, such as books, uniforms, transport and materials. According to calculations of the 1998-2002 National Development Plan, this means that 3.26% of GDP is used to finance 33% of enrolment in private establishments.

413. This shows that, despite the increase in public expenditure, families make a significant contribution to education funding, while public funding is insufficient to achieve the target of universal basic education. This is due in part to the difficulty of distributing resources between the different regions, and in part to the increase in the cost of teaching staff which occurred in the middle of the decade.

414. If public expenditure on education is broken down in terms of operating and investment costs, the trend in the last five years has been similar to that of the period 1990 to 1994, during which operating costs accounted on average for 85% of the budget and investment costs 15%. This trend began to change in 1995, when investment in the sector picked up until it accounted for 24% of total expenditure. It then remained at that level until 1996, when operating costs took up 70% and investment 30% of the budget. For 1999, the proportions of the budget devoted to operating costs and investment have reverted to the situation prevailing in the early years of the decade.

H. Education quality

415. According to the results of the SABER programme, one quarter of all students in the seventh grade of public sector schools are below the minimum standard in language tests, while fewer than 20% achieve an optimum standard in the seventh and ninth grades. According to the Third International Mathematics and Science Study (TIMSS), the Colombian students who were the best placed in the tests obtained lower scores than the international average, especially in mathematics tests. Moreover, the effective time spent on learning is low compared to that of the more industrialized countries. While a Japanese child devotes 1 800 hours per year to learning, a Colombian child spends no more than 600 to 700 hours.

416. Among the various strategies deployed to improve the quality of basic education in the period 1994-1998, the following features stand out:

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[50] Ministry of Education - 1999 - Education for All Programme. Evaluation in the year 2000.

a) The introduction of a compulsory pre-school grade (initially known as Grade 0), reaching 221 531 children in 7 433 classes, thanks to the development of cofinancing projects in 750 municipalities in 32 departments and 4 districts;

b) Plan for Universal Basic Primary Education. This plan was financed with external loans and completed in 1998. It concentrated on improving education in rural and indigenous areas, through the construction of new schools, improvements and extensions of existing infrastructures, the supply of 25 million books and 570 000 packages of teaching materials, in addition to teacher training. The plan made a noteworthy contribution to the expansion of the "New School" methodology;

c) Plan for Extending the Coverage and Improving the Quality of Secondary Education (PACES), March 1995 - December 2000. Over three years of the programme, 89 projects for the extension or construction of premises were financed; an additional 9 395 posts were created; rental terms were improved in 285 establishments benefiting 16 686 students already enrolled; grants were provided to 24 773 students in strata 1 and 2 to attend private schools, and 400 public sector schools were offered resources to improve their physical infrastructure, their stock of textbooks and materials and their teacher training.

I. Other aspects

1. Internal efficiency and quality of education

417. The improvement achieved with the internal efficiency indicators of the Colombian educational system has been related to the introduction of a new concept of educational institution, provided with adequate administrative, technical and human resources and able to develop an efficient style of educational management, that is to say, such as to improve the quality of education. The change of direction was implemented through various strategies:

a) Establishment of the Institutional Educational Project (PEI). This has constituted the basis of all programmes aimed at improving educational quality. It is designed as an ongoing process of human and institutional development in an effort to create a suitable environment for growing and being, learning and developing, channelling plans and actions through a lively, dynamic form of organization, whose primary aim is to improve the quality of life of each and every member of the educational community. It is a space for dialogue, construction, reflection and consultation. The project is currently being developed in 90% of the country's educational establishments. In order to further the project, guidance and support are provided on a permanent basis to the 36 education secretariats; 577 weaker institutions have been assisted with the design of projects; an incentive worth 5.8 million pesos has been granted to 200 institutions with exceptional projects (PEIs); 204 outstanding experiments were identified and presented at national level as models; and 40 000 copies were published of the following documents: "Reflection on institutional educational projects and Guide for the development of operating plans", "PEI Guidelines", "PEI development process" and "PEI evaluation guide";

b) Training the educational community and strengthening school management. In order to confirm the new role of the school as the centre of the educational system and to assist its social integration, the Ministry of Education has undertaken many measures and has institutionalized programmes related to peace, democracy, human rights and the conservation of the environment in all sectors of the country. These measures have included the institutionalization of school management and the student body and the adoption of coexistence manuals in all educational establishments, which have been bringing about changes in culture and the school authority structure;

c) Improvement of school resources, in terms of materials, teaching aids and books. In 1996, 3.5 million language and mathematics folders were published and distributed among public sector schools; in 1997, 5.2 million sets of language, social study, natural science and mathematics books were distributed to 42 978 rural and 7 069 urban schools; in 1998, 50 000 sets of educational aids were distributed, alongside other teaching aids as part of the "Jaibaná" package (meaning "wise" in the language of the Embera, a Colombian indigenous community), benefiting more than 5 million children;

d) School grants programme. This consists in the joint financing of projects as part of municipal educational plans aimed at removing obstacles that prevent the school-age population in rural and marginal urban areas from accessing and/or remaining in basic primary education. This programme began operations in 1994 through the Social Solidarity Network in 17 municipalities, which were offered 14 000 grants. In 1997, 764 projects had already been implemented, providing assistance to 131 328 school-age children.

2. Education evaluation

418. In fulfilment of the constitutional obligation to ensure the quality of education and in recognition of the importance of evaluation in a country caught up in the process of decentralization, the General Education Act instituted a National Evaluation System to guide educational improvement policies and plans.

419. The measures taken include:

a) Design and application of a national evaluation system for basic primary and secondary establishments and students. This includes an evaluation of the studies of children in a sample of 240 000 pupils in third and fifth grade of primary and seventh and ninth grade of secondary school. The tests in grades 3 and 5 in 1997 and 1998 achieved a coverage of 135 690 students and 9 500 teachers of these grades working in 3 896 educational establishments.

b) Evaluation of institutions. In 1997, all educational institutions in the country were sent the Guide of Institutional Self-Evaluation and Improvement with a view to helping schools assess school management.

c) Publication of results. Guides for languages and mathematics teachers, documents concerning factors related to performance for grades 3 and 5 and the results obtained in mathematics and languages were published and distributed to 50 000 schools in the country.

3. Academic training of teachers and improvement

420. According to the Ministry of Education, a requirement for teaching in basic primary education is that teachers should have completed teacher training. This condition applied to 54% of teachers at that level, while 35% had completed higher education studies. It is worth noting that 89% of teachers in basic primary education have completed some form of teacher training.

421. In basic secondary and intermediate vocational education, teachers have to be graduates. Out of the total, 82.5% had completed higher studies and of those, 70.7% held degrees related to teaching.

422. In other words, qualified teachers are employed at all educational levels, according to the following distribution: 88.4% in pre-school; 89.6% in basic primary and 82% in basic secondary and intermediate.

423. Since 1995, the Colombian Government has been making considerable efforts to improve vocational training and the living conditions and salaries of teachers.

424. Among the measures undertaken to this effect, the following are worth mentioning:

a) National Teacher Training Programme and System. In the period 1994-1995, the Government undertook to promote diversified education, with the aim of improving the capacity of teachers. The Ministry of Education therefore established guidelines for teacher training. It carried out a study of public and private institutions offering teacher training for the purpose of diversifying the supply at regional level, and it gave advice to regions on the preparation of projects for the continuing training of teachers. Altogether 49 departmental training agreements were prepared and signed, benefiting 107 986 teachers and principals of basic primary schools in urban and rural areas included in the "New School" (Escuela Nueva) Programme. In 1997, the National Programme and System for the Training and Full Development of Colombian Teachers was launched and the MEN-ICETEX Fund was established for upgrading languages and mathematics teaching, considered to be critical subjects in basic primary and secondary education.

b) Training new teachers. Following lengthy study and consultation, three decrees were issued relating to guidelines, criteria and general rules for the organization and development of academic and further training programmes. They included: Decree No. 709 of 1997 on the organization and development of academic and further training programmes for the training and further training of teachers; Decree No. 3012 of 1997 on the organization and operation of teacher training colleges; and Decree No. 272 on the establishment of requirements for the introduction and operation of academic pre-graduate and postgraduate programmes in education.

c) Human rights. In order to deal with the frequent occurrence of human rights violations in some regions of the country, which have affected a considerable number of teachers, the National Committee on the Prevention, Protection and Stabilization of Threatened and Displaced Teachers was set up under the coordination of the Ministry of Education. A further measure was the establishment of Departmental Security Councils, responsible for studying and dealing specifically with teachers victims of war, and a programme was developed to train teachers in ethical values, peaceful coexistence and the defence of human rights, by virtue of an agreement signed with the National Federation of Teachers.

d) Social centres and housing. During this period (1994-1997), the Ministry of Education ordered the construction of four social, recreational and training centres with a view to improving the social wellbeing and quality of life of teachers and their families. The Ministry of Education set aside 12 000 million pesos for the purpose, 3 000 million for each centre, and signed inter-institutional agreements for the implementation of the works. In 1997-1998, the central Government and the Colombian Teachers' Federation (FECODE) initiated a housing programme for 10 000 teachers, and by the end of 1998, the Government had arranged for the acquisition of 11 160 housing units.

e) Salary improvements. In 1995, the Quality of Education Act was signed by the Ministry of Education and the Colombian Teachers' Federation, granting a salary increase to all teachers of 8% in addition to the annual increment granted to all civil servants for three years. Furthermore, in 1997, by Decree No. 1381 of 26 May, a vacation bonus was introduced for public sector teachers equivalent to 40% of the basic monthly remuneration in 1997 and 50% from 1998. As a result, the salaries of all teachers increased by a real 17.3 points between 1995 and 1998. These salary increases occurred at a time of growing national income deficit and considerable shortcomings in the quality of education. It is hoped that in the future salary increases will serve not only to improve the incomes of teachers but also as incentives to achieve higher qualification standards among teaching staff and hence a better quality of education.

4. Final considerations regarding education

425. Four features stand out in the development of basic education in Colombia:

a) Significant progress in terms of coverage and internal efficiency in primary and secondary education. Although primary education is still not within the reach of all children aged between 7 and 11, at least 21 percentage points were obtained out of the 39 still missing in 1985 to achieve complete coverage. Since it becomes increasingly difficult in primary education to increase coverage as this comes closer to 100%, if the goal of universal primary education is to be achieved, a deliberate effort will need to be made, based on innovative, focussed strategies, in order to sustain progress and in the end to achieve the desired objective. In secondary education, the progress led by the public sector has been remarkable. Nevertheless, there still remains a great deal to be done. At this level, what is needed is increased supply combined with strategies to stimulate demand and an improvement in internal efficiency.

b) Gaps between departments. The population flows between departments have a considerable impact on attempts to extend enrolment coverage in some departments. In certain other departments, enrolment efforts have been more successful thanks to slower population growth. In this respect, what are needed are timely, reliable sources of information on the basis of which to allocate resources in support of regional efforts. Allocations cannot be made without taking into account the coverage already achieved, which depends both on population change and on the effort made in terms of public sector supply.

c) Reduced gap between urban and rural education and between public and private education, in terms of internal efficiency. Nevertheless, differences are still considerable in favour of urban education and private education. For the public sector, an improvement in the management of public institutions is one of the factors which could produce the best results as far as improving internal efficiency is concerned. The improvements achieved in rural primary education, which is mostly public sector and where changes are mostly attributable to the "New School" (Escuela Nueva) methodology, show just how effective methodological changes can be for improving efficiency. The shortfalls in the coverage in secondary schooling are clearly concentrated in the poorest deciles of the population, so that in that area the improvement strategy would imply further and more efficient action by the public sector.

d) The need to change the information system. The type of annual census based on data collected from schools and processed and used centrally reflects an obsolete approach to information, which has resulted in practice in a trickle of unreliable data. An effort must be made to improve the ability of municipal and departmental authorities to use statistics and to encourage the core sector to concentrate instead on analysis, technical advice and evaluation. There is a need for less data, more analysis, greater attention to financial and cost analysis, greater stability in quality tests and above all a much greater use of information in decision making.

5. Women and education

426. In Colombia access to the educational system is based on equal rights and enrolment is generally divided equally between boys and girls. Thus in 1995 total enrolment of 8 714 603 included 4 395 672 boys and 4 318 931 girls. In 1997, the distribution was 4 256 518 male for 4 302 672 female. Throughout the 1990s, however, significant efforts continued to be made to ensure the fulfilment of constitutional principles regarding universal access to basic education, with a decentralization of educational services and greater participation by civil society.

427. As part of its policy, the Government issued Act No. 115 of 1993, which was to take effect through the 1994-1998 National Development Plan, and set out its Ten-Year Plan for Education 1996-2005. This plan clearly spells out the need to combat all forms of discrimination and isolation which, on grounds of gender, might still affect women's access to and maintenance in the educational system.

428. The situation of women has been improved in various ways in the last decade, including the following in particular.

429. The trend towards greater female participation in enrolment at all educational levels has been maintained. In 1993, women represented 52.5% of the pre-school student population, although in 1991 their proportion was only 50.7%. In basic primary education, their participation was close to 50%, varying little in respect to former years. In basic secondary and intermediate vocational education, 52.9% of enrolment was accounted for by women, 3.7% more than in 1990, while in higher education, women made up nearly 52% of the student population.

430. A similar tendency to earlier years was maintained with regard to female dropout rates in formal schooling and the numbers of women successfully completing the various grades, reflecting greater educational efficiency on the side of girls compared with boys, as measured by their retention in the system.

431. Among teachers, the tendency for more women to be employed in the lower levels of the system was maintained, in proportions which tend to decrease through the grades up to higher education. Nevertheless, women have increased their participation at the highest level by 2% in the last decade.

432. The influence of gender stereotypes has persisted in vocational choices, but has tended to decline, as shown by the enrolment in special subjects of secondary and higher education.

433. There has been a slight reduction in the rates of female illiteracy, which declined from 9% to 8.4% between 1990 and 1993.

434. Colombia has recently achieved relative equality in terms of literacy and access to and maintenance in the educational system for boys and girls. Nevertheless, gender stereotypes still persist in primary and secondary schools, taking the form of different treatment for boys and for girls in curriculum contents and in educational books and materials.

6. Adult education

435. The 1991 Constitution opened up major new directions in Colombian education. Unlike the former Constitution, this one gave overriding importance to education, at the same time placing an emphasis on the State's obligations regarding the fundamental rights of indigenous peoples, Afro-Colombians and other minority ethnic groups, on the basis of a recognition of the principles of diversity, a multicultural society, autonomy, devolution and respect for those people's own cultures and educational systems.

436. The emphasis placed on their education is enshrined in Act No. 115 of 1994, or General Education Act, which was the outcome of a broad-ranging campaign among public opinion.

437. One of the components expressly mentioned is adult education, defined as that offered to persons above the normal age considered for the levels and grades of the public educational service desiring to supplement or complete their studies. The Act also set out the time and special conditions needed to

facilitate and promote adult education, including distance education (still not regulated) and part-time attendance.

438. The General Education Act, issued in conformity with the Constitution's mandates, declares among its specific objectives the aim of bringing education to young adults and to the peasant rural population, especially girls and women, minority ethnic groups, disabled persons and any undergoing social rehabilitation. According to the General Act, the basic tasks are:

- To inculcate and update basic training and to facilitate access to all levels of education;
- To eradicate illiteracy;
- To update knowledge, according to the level of education, and
- To develop the ability to participate in economic, political, social, cultural and community life.

439. The follow-up to the Act is also significant. Not only has there been an acceptance of the spirit of participation in the development of legal standards, but the country has undertaken to regulate the substantive aspects of the Act. These include constitutional recognition of ethnic cultures, starting to integrate people with disabilities or talents in regular schooling, and devising a legal framework for adult education, which for the first time in history will offer and promote educational alternatives not merely based on conceptual postulates, research, experiments and practices, but also responding to the labour requirements of the productive sector and to the challenges and demands of the modern world.

440. The experience gained with the drafting of Decree No. 3011/97 on the basis of open participation was followed by a series of consultations around the preparation of the Vth World Conference on Adult Education, held in June 1997. Local discussions were encouraged on topics such as learning for the future, the role of new methodologies and innovations in a world marked by the rise of the global economy, the role of communications, computing and technology, the new standards of employment, production and work, not forgetting the effects of the armed conflict, violence, the different forms of discrimination, continuing drug trafficking and poverty.

441. In addition to the above advances, an effort has been made to diversify supply by involving young people and adults in literacy programmes in basic primary and secondary education and in intermediate education, including persons enrolled in informal education programmes, which offer a broad variety of courses aimed chiefly at job training.

442. This broader supply has been accompanied by a greater diversity in curriculum content, so as to facilitate training in basic skills. Despite that emphasis, other dimensions such as democracy, citizenship, ethics and values, health, ecology, work and production have been incorporated as core educational subjects.

443. Despite the progress achieved, there are still major differences between regions, especially in areas more remote from the centre, which particularly affect the poorest peasant population.

444. There has been a growing involvement in Colombia on the part of the organizations of civil society. Adult education, by its nature and its deep rooted popular impact, has attracted the attention and dedication of NGOs, as well as the business sector, the Church, the academic world and educational establishments through the Compulsory Social Service.

445. Colombia is facing the challenge of mobilizing sufficient political will to give effect to the objectives of the Ten-Year Education Plan (1996-2005), especially those related to the revival of sound, effective national policies and to the input of the necessary institutional, technical and financial resources. Furthermore, the academic sector is expected to proceed with its research efforts aimed at producing the content required for the training of young people and adults, particularly those related to the validation of knowledge, know-how, practice and experience which adults have gained outside school, or related to the relevance and validity of learning adapted to the demands of the future. Further attention should be paid to the development of methodologies and teaching materials which are useful, interactive and socially attractive, leading to education of better quality, more accessible and geared to the comprehensive training of citizens and the preparation of basic social and environmental skills.

446. When referring to the opportunities for continuing education, the Plan considers the need to offer a second opportunity to young people who have dropped out of basic education. As a strategy, it proposes to redesign existing programmes for the education of young people and adults in order to encourage independent and group study, using flexible educational strategies, duly supported by the communication media, especially radio and television.

7. International cooperation in the implementation of the right to education

447. It is not possible in this report to cover the many contributions of international technical cooperation to the development of the Colombian education sector, owing to the diversity of sources operating in the country and the many internal agencies (in the form of public and private basic, intermediate and higher education institutions, NGOs, decentralized government bodies, etc.). The information given below therefore refers only to cooperation channelled through the Ministry of Education by multilateral organizations in support of basic and intermediate education.

448. During the period covered by the report, the contributions of the kind referred to amounted to US$ 6 414 150, distributed as follows:

Table 7

Subjects	US Dollars
Youth and Prevention	2,050,000
Improving the quality of education	956,000
Pre-school education	567,098
Education in values (peace, democracy, tolerance, human rights)	530,852
Sex and population education	518,000
Ethnic education	472,817
Environmental education	460,000
Rural education	413,500
Occupational education	161,983
Reconstruction of schools	75,000
Gender perspective	60,500
Use of new technologies in education	45,000
Strengthening regional integration and cooperation	113,400

8. Education policy in the National Development Plan "Change for building peace"

a) Pre-school education

449. The 1998-2002 National Development Plan set up the Ursulas Programme for the benefit of family groups and all boys and girls from birth to 5 years old.

450. Taking into account the day-to-day routine and cultural environment of this population, the programme tries to:

a) Provide 1 million parents with favourable conditions enabling them to develop the full human potential of their children;

b) Provide children from birth to 5 years old with timely, high-quality educational alternatives, which will strengthen their affective, social and communicative environment through television and other communication media;

c) Set up 1 000 nuclear family micro-centres and 500 play centres in establishments equipped with pre-school facilities and involve various social, institutional and community actors in 1 000 affective play areas;

d) Influence departmental, district and municipal development plans in favour of the identification, strengthening, establishment and incorporation of educational alternatives for this population group;

e) Manage human, physical and financial resources through natural and legal persons or national and international cooperation organizations in support of the municipal, departmental and national alternatives created;

f) Coordinate Ursulas activities with other pre-school educational activities and with those of the Colombian Family Welfare Institute (ICBF).

b) Basic education

451. The 1998-2002 National Development Plan includes several strategies to increase the coverage of the educational system, with special emphasis on the quality of the education provided, and on seeking greater efficiency in the allocation of resources and in the management and implementation of education policies.

452. In order to encourage a greater commitment to education on the part of society, the Plan attempts to strengthen school management teams and to establish accountability mechanisms, while creating incentives for local bodies to achieve and maintain high levels of performance in educational management. The Plan considers it important to involve new actors in the implementation of education projects.

453. Specifically, in order to achieve universal coverage, the National Development Plan proposes to reform the system of allocating resources, to increase the teacher/pupil ratio and to introduce demand subsidies.

454. In order to remedy certain difficulties and to improve the way the education sector operates, the aim is: to establish technical standards and new criteria for the allocation of resources; to clarify the

powers and responsibilities of different territorial levels; to allow greater autonomy to educational establishments; and to introduce a programme of horizontal technical assistance between the education authorities and public and private establishments, thereby achieving exchanges that will improve the management and quality of education.

455. The mechanisms that are suitable for monitoring and improving quality include the following:

a) Establishment of the National Quality Evaluation System;

b) Rises up the teaching ladder related to teacher assessments;

c) Stronger mechanisms for regulating the quality of educational establishments caring for the disabled;

d) Efforts to ensure that the contents, teaching methodologies, institutional regulations and school culture favour gender equality, as well as respect for the identity of the disadvantaged population and ethnic groups.

456. In order to fulfil the State's commitment to guarantee equal access for all to good quality education, a further effort will be made to reform the present system of allocating resources, which will henceforth be based on results. Technical standards will be adopted and incentives introduced to reward efficiency. The funding of education and the use of resources will be regulated on the basis of reports and data supplied by the national management information system. In addition, consideration will be given to introducing a property surcharge to finance intermediate education.

VIII. CULTURE (art 15)

457. The Ministry of Culture was set up under Act No. 397 of 7 August 1997, and its policies were set out in the 1998-2002 National Development Plan "Change for building peace". The Plan recognizes that "culture, as a fundamental dimension of development, facilitates the rebuilding of identities, the creation of a concept of citizenship allowing participation in decisions of common interest and the construction of an ethic and behaviour of coexistence that prepares citizens for life together based on solidarity, participation and tolerance". The State undertakes not only to support cultural activity as a facilitator, promoter, manager and creator of conditions for just cultural development, but also to encourage the commitment of civil society, territorial authorities and the private sector to achieve the objectives proposed in the Plan.

458. One of the main objectives is to consolidate the National Culture System as an essential strategy for achieving decentralization in this sector. This implies setting up local cultural councils and institutions, strengthening non-governmental organizations and placing more emphasis on training, information, planning, organization and financing.

459. The cultural heritage, material or otherwise, is considered as a basic element of development and a primary source of the country's memory and identity. Its conservation, enhancement and recognition will therefore be part of the State's policies. An artistic and cultural component will be included in basic education and humanities teaching will be strengthened. Artistic creativity and research will be stimulated with a view to recognizing and promoting the artistic potential which will ensure the continuity of the country's cultural traditions. An effort will be made to strengthen communication media with a view to democratizing information and access to artistic and cultural activities, goods and

services. Incentives will be offered for investment in the sector with the aim of consolidating the cultural sector as a source of economic and social development.

460. Before entering into a description of the various programmes through which the Ministry of Culture is helping to protect the cultural rights of the Colombian people, it is worth noting the progress made in Colombian law since the 1991 Constitution, in the form of new laws on books, intellectual property, education, the environment, science and technology, electronic commerce, black communities, indigenous communities, and through the General Culture Act, which came into effect in 1997. A description is given below of the programmes to which the Ministry of Culture is committed as the means of promoting culture and fulfilling the right of all Colombians to be a part of and participants in culture.

A. National Artistic and Cultural Training System

461. In its article 64, the General Culture Act set up the National Artistic and Cultural Training System, with the aim of guiding, coordinating and promoting the development of informal artistic and cultural education, and determining the necessary policies, plans and strategies for its development.

462. Within the framework of this system, the Ministry of Culture has been evaluating, debating and projecting the best ways of fulfilling its mandate of democratizing training opportunities in the field of art and cultural knowledge, and in particular of meeting the objective of decentralizing culture. The Ministry is actively working on the consolidation of networks to allow the regions, departments, municipalities and localities to organize and access some focal points of artistic and cultural training according to their needs and characteristics.

463. The Ministry does not intend to replace existing training facilities and bodies, nor to compete with them; on the contrary, it aims to strengthen them and support them, and to guide them towards improving the quality of the training they offer. Nevertheless, it will support the implementation of new training experiments, especially in fields or areas in the country where there are obvious gaps or shortcomings.

464. The first preparatory step towards undertaking the necessary consultations as a basis for an agreed plan of action was to convene the first National Artistic and Cultural Training Seminar, which was held from 27 to 29 July 1998 in Bogotá and was attended by 930 representatives of the artistic, cultural and educational sectors of 27 departments in the country.

465. Work is also continuing on the consolidation of the Departmental Artistic and Cultural Training Systems, subject to the principle of respecting the processes and characteristics of each system and keeping the channels of communication with the regions under permanent review. Efforts are also being combined to set up pilot centres, in order to enable the regions to gravitate around self-sustainable training centres, however distant these are from the main urban centres.

466. Instructor training, the introduction of indicators to measure the results of artistic and cultural training and links with the education sector are other objectives to which the system is committed in order to improve the standard, quality and coverage of education related to Colombia's creative cultural institutions.

B. National Consultation Programme

467. In 1998, the Ministry of Culture signed agreements with non-profit-making cultural bodies to promote national talent and to democratize access to art and culture. These include 78 approved halls, 65 regional, national and international events, 25 artistic training and cultural management schools,

15 museums of modern art, 15 foundations caring for Colombia's cultural heritage and 5 symphony orchestras.

468. There are at present over 1 000 non-governmental organizations specializing in different aspects of culture and the arts. The Ministry supports some 40% of these through its National Consultation Programme or its various investment programmes.

C. National Cultural Infrastructure Programme "La Casa Grande"

469. This programme concentrates more particularly on municipalities in the new departments, those where the State has traditionally played only a minor role, those with high rates of poverty and social conflict and those which are geographically remote. Further focuses of attention are indigenous communities, black and Raizales (island) communities, border areas and municipalities equipped with the necessary management and organizational facilities to ensure the start-up of the planned centres.

470. One good feature of the programme, which is being carried out in consultation with territorial governments, is that it has generated new employment and an innovative architectural project, through which it is hoped to restore and reuse national monuments and heritage buildings.

D. Programme of incentives for artistic creation and research

471. This programme aims to encourage and support creative activity in the country in as many different areas as possible of artistic expression, as well as researchers who, thanks to their training and strict methodological approach, are proposing projects with a considerable impact in the social sciences.

472. The programme runs two flagship projects: the National Culture Fellowships and the National Culture Prizes.

473. The programme operates on the basis of a set of procedures and strategies that ensure objectivity, transparency and impartiality in the selection of fellowship beneficiaries and prize winners. These criteria will be further strengthened by the desire to optimize the resources invested, by channelling the programme's efforts to projects that best respond to the country's cultural needs.

1. National and Departmental Culture Fellowships

474. The National Fellowships are devised as a form of incentive for projects involving creativity, research, the construction of identity and other forms of expression, such as the cinema, literature, stage productions, community radio, etc.

475. In 1998, altogether 1 343 projects were received, of which 84 were declared winners, originating in 17 of Colombia's departments and one in the United States. The total sum of 1 723 746 317 pesos was allocated. Several of the projects came from remote regions, such as Belén de los Andaquíes (Caquetá) and Inírida (Guainía), which reflect the Ministry's wish to extend the programme right across the country, generating social cohesion and creating areas of cultural dissemination and community awareness.

2. National Culture Prizes

476. When the call for submissions for the National Culture Prizes was issued in 1988, 946 works were received of more than 15 different kinds, covering such areas as literature, music, history, photography and anthropology, amongst others. Despite the harsh economic conditions prevailing in the

country, a considerable effort was made to maintain the promised amount of each prize and to reach out to all places in the country.

3. Departmental Culture Prizes

477. In coordination and consultation with the regions and with the Mixed Departmental and District Funds for the Promotion of Culture and the Arts, the first call for prizes was launched this year for music, history, storytelling and poetry. The funds made a key contribution, and 1 199 works were received from all the country's regions, through the CORPES (regional economic and social planning councils). The programme distributed a total of 376 million pesos to 126 prize-winners.

478. In addition, the Ministry has initiated other programmes to create new possibilities of support and recognition for creative artists, research workers and cultural managers. They include the Colombia-Mexico artistic residences, the fellowships run jointly with the Mixed Funds and the Departmental Culture Prizes.

E. National Cultural Information System (SINIC)

479. The Ministry of Culture is developing the National Cultural Information System (SINIC) by organizing the capture, recovery and consolidation of data from the cultural sector, by promoting the information service network in Colombia and by generating statistics to be used to produce basic administration and consumption indicators.

480. The data generated by SINIC has to be of high quality, relevant, quantified and reliable. The system must be managed on the principle of continuous improvement, with the support of technical advice and assistance to ensure the constant updating of information as well as easy access to data by all members of the public requiring them or helping to collate them.

481. A seminar was recently held in Bogotá, attended by practically all the departments, on the current state and challenges of the SIMIC. The results of the seminar were satisfactory, insofar as it elicited a commitment on the part of the departments to support the programme.

F. CREA, a foray through Colombian culture

482. Six years after it was first launched, the CREA programme has undergone a broad-ranging review, coordinated by the Promotion and Development Directorate and by the Institute of Anthropological Culture. The material accumulated by the programme provides a valuable, complete picture of the present situation regarding popular cultures in Colombia, in addition to assisting nationality-building and providing significant guidance for the design and preparation of a cultural policy in favour of popular cultures.

IX. GENERAL CONCLUSIONS

483. The results presented in the earlier chapters of this report lead to the conclusion that during this decade Colombia has significantly increased its social expenditure but that, despite this increase, significant shortcomings still persist in terms of the coverage and quality of the supply of basic social services. This implies that in order to achieve the objectives of equal access to these services and to improve the living conditions of the poorest population, merely increasing the magnitude of resources is not enough. There is a need to have available clear, reliable information, which will make it possible to identify the poorest population and to establish expenditure priorities, so as to focus this expenditure in the best way possible. There is also a need to find ways of improving management and efficiency in the

implementation of policies and programmes and in the application of expenditure. Lastly, there is a need to ensure that implementation is properly evaluated and monitored so that the necessary adjustments may be introduced in order to achieve the proposed targets and objectives.

484. More specifically, the following conclusions may be drawn:

- In Colombia, from 1986 onwards, priority was given in State expenditure to basic social services. Since the fall in social expenditure that occurred with the 1985 adjustment, there has been continuous growth in all spending, but with a clear preference for basic social services. The most noteworthy features of the last five years have been the extraordinary growth in expenditure on health, the dynamism of the water and sanitation sector, but also an alarming decline in expenditure on basic education, without having achieved universal coverage and without having significantly improved the quality of the service provided.

- An analysis of social indicators and social expenditure in Colombia points to two significant facts. On the one hand, it is clear that the country has not succeeded in achieving universal coverage in basic social services. On the other hand it is also obvious that, despite a doubling of expenditure on these services in the last decade, no significant improvements have occurred in terms of reducing inequality and poverty. Colombia is therefore hoping for a greater commitment on the part of other countries and international bodies and organizations to help it achieve universal coverage of its basic social services, especially in the poorest and most backward areas.

- Inequality as measured before the distribution of subsidies has not diminished in the last 20 years despite continuous growth in the economy. If all subsidies and their distribution by deciles are analysed, a striking feature is the major proportion taken up by health subsidies. The total is distributed in the proportions of 52% for the two wealthiest quintiles and 48% for the poorest 50%. Subsidies represent 60% of the incomes of households in the first decile, 43% in the second and 25% in the third. It may be said, then, that while basic social expenditure has a great redistribution potential, its fairness could be notably improved if it were better focussed. Re-channelling existing subsidies to the poorest sectors of the population could have a considerable impact in the struggle against poverty.

- In 1998, the Social Mission carried out an approximate calculation of the total cost of universal coverage in basic education, basic health, care for minors and basic water and sanitation. Achieving such coverage would require an investment of 2 090 824 million pesos, in terms of constant 1996 pesos. This figure is equivalent to 2.2% of GDP. Nevertheless, in the last decade Colombia increased its expenditure on basic social services by more than that percentage of GDP, raising it from 3.37% in 1990 to 6.94% in 1997. According to these figures, the challenge of achieving universal coverage would not appear to depend on the magnitude of resources or the capacity for further increase. Achieving this objective depends on the possibility of channelling expenditure to the most vulnerable population, on introducing the right mechanisms for establishing priorities among requirements, and on implementing the sort of policies and instruments which will achieve effective and efficient management in the handling and allocation of those resources. The first of these objectives requires, in addition to the necessary political will, more precise knowledge of the poorest population. A collective effort to achieve clear targets is an essential driving force for the purpose of improving the effectiveness and efficiency of expenditure. It is clear, however, that there is a need to improve the efficiency of public social expenditure and to establish monitoring and evaluation mechanisms. For this, the

resources of international technical cooperation are needed, especially in such areas as education and nutrition.

485. The trend in education in Colombia over the last 12 years shows several basic features:

- A significant improvement in the coverage and internal efficiency of primary and secondary education. The remaining gaps in coverage are clearly confined to the poorest quintiles and dispersed populations;

- The reasons for the lack of assistance are to a considerable extent economic. This means that policies should concentrate on providing carefully focussed subsidies to the poorest sectors of urban populations, while searching for new technological means based on the mass media to reach rural areas and dispersed populations;

- Preference should be given to strategies directed at demand in the towns and thorough methodological changes in the supply available to rural areas;

- In secondary education, the lead taken by the public sector has been noteworthy. Nevertheless, there is still a long way to go. In this respect, increasing supply still plays an important role. Moreover, unless internal efficiency is substantially improved, there will simply not be enough youngsters reaching basic secondary education. In order to improve efficiency, public revenue transfers to the municipalities should make sure they encourage expenditure focussed more on improving quality than on taking on new staff.

486. Colombia has made significant progress in improving the health of the population. This improvement is due partly to rising incomes, partly to an improving standard of public education and a reduction in family size, and partly to progress in medicine. But a good part is due, especially in more recent years, to the changes introduced with Act No. 100 of 1993 in the way the health and social security systems are organized. However, these improvements have not benefited the whole population to the same extent. While urban areas are better off, many rural areas are still experiencing the sort of health problems which have already been successfully dealt with in the towns. In the areas of both health and education, the main concern is the search for equal rights and the strategy should be to encourage the communities themselves to become involved.

487. To sum up, the poverty measures presented in this section of the report suggest that poverty has diminished slightly since 1978 and that the main improvements have occurred in the larger towns.

488. The selected indicators show that in the decade of the 1990s not enough was done to help the poorest sectors of the population and that the problems of equal rights and fair distribution have not yet been solved. If the structural causes of poverty are to be changed, it will be necessary to improve access to human capital, to adapt the supply of labour to the requirements of the production sector, and above all to ensure the efficiency and focus of public expenditure, so that whatever resources are available effectively reach the most vulnerable sector of the population as a means of fulfilling the commitments of reducing poverty and eradicating extreme poverty in Colombia.